

READER

'The big house and the picket fence'

Tonya Crowder still dreams that she and her fiancé, Roosevelt Myles—who's been in prison for decades fighting what he says is a wrongful conviction—will one day build a life together somewhere "nice, quiet, and simple."

By MARI COHEN 7

IN THIS ISSUE

CITY LIFE

03 Sightseeing Travel tips for Chicago for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (yes, you should tip your servers).

NEWS & POLITICS

05 Joravsky | Politics Imagine covering Madigan and Foxx the way Republican-run media cover Trump.

FEATURE

07 Criminal Justice Tonya Crowder still dreams that she and her fiancé, Roosevelt Myles—who's been in prison for decades fighting what he says is a wrongful conviction—will one day build a life together somewhere.



FOOD & DRINK

13 Restaurant Review Albany Park has a new Yemeni restaurant from a veteran Yemeni restaurateur.

ARTS & CULTURE

15 Listings The first Latina to create, write, and star in a network

television sitcom has a show, and more arts and culture happenings.



16 Comedy Korporate Bidness turns to YouTube to hilariously highlight what #BlackChicagoBeLike.



18 Festival Furries aren't all fetishists—they're members of a supportive community who (sometimes) don costumes to feel more comfortable in their own skins.

19 Lit Choose-your-own-adventure parody Build Your Own Christmas Movie Romance features the best tropes of made-for-TV specials.

20 Dance Bangarra Dance Theatre rekindles Aboriginal heritage.

THEATER

20 Review Dennis Začec stages Waiting for Godot again—48 years after his first time; an academic debate becomes a racially charged conflagration in The Niceties.

22 Plays of note The Nutcracker returns to House with a few twists; a woman explores her limits in Queen of Sock Pairing; and Why Torture Is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them is a brutal send-up of American paranoia.



FILM

24 Review Marriage Story, Noah Baumbach's latest film about divorce, doesn't pick sides.

24 Movies of note Tom Hanks continues to prove he can do no wrong in A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood; Breakthrough examines modern-day immunotherapy hero Jim Allison.

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

26 Feature Life was just a party: Prince's 1999 and Chicago house music



30 Shows of note High on Fire, Young M.A., Las Cafeteras, and more this week

32 The Secret History of Chicago Music Pieces of Peace cut most of their brilliant soul-funk for other people's records

35 Early Warnings Airborne Toxic Event, Kiss, Keith Fullerton Whitman, and more just-announced concerts

35 Gossip Wolf Local noise-rock bands Den and Salvation drop new albums this week, Epworth United Methodist hosts an experimental music festival, and more.

OPINION

36 Savage Love Dan Savage offers advice on how not to be that professor.

CLASSIFIEDS

38 Jobs
39 Apartments & Spaces
39 Marketplace

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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

AS YOU MAY have heard this week, the *Reader*, the city's alt-weekly founded in 1971, will be moving to a nonprofit model in 2020. The nation's first free weekly newspaper joins dozens of newsrooms around the country in pursuing nonprofit status as a stabilizing force for the future of the industry.

We couldn't be more excited about this next phase of the *Reader's* history, and we want to thank all of you who have gotten us this far. We couldn't have done it without you.

We have always been free in print and online, and we want to remain that way. Community-backed journalism is one way we remain independent, stable, and accessible to all.

A new nonprofit, the Reader Institute for Community Journalism, will be launched in January and purchase the *Reader* from Elzie Higginbottom and Leonard Goodman, the two owners who saved the newspaper in 2018. Both owners have given extensive support to the *Reader* and have committed to continue their support into 2020.

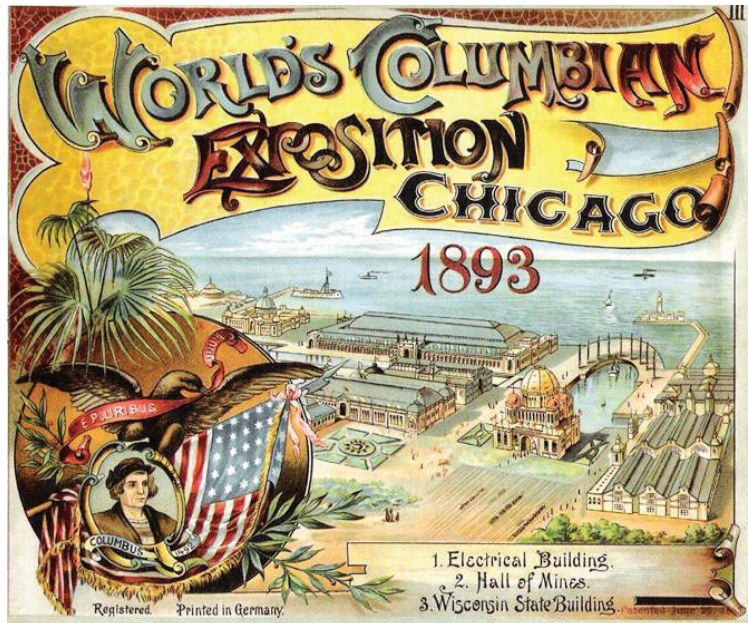
Even with their backing, even with our belief in the promise of this path forward, we still need you along on this journey with us. The transition to nonprofit comes with a lot of onetime legal and accounting costs, so we are reaching out to you for your support. Can you help with a onetime contribution or an on-

going monthly commitment at chicagoreader.com/donate?

The board of the Reader Institute for Community Journalism will include a mix of former and new *Reader* board members, and the company's leadership will remain in place, including myself and editors in chief Karen Hawkins and Sujay Kumar.

This new model will help the *Reader* continue its literary and award-winning journalism by opening up more revenue opportunities. The *Reader* has been swift to criticize those who put profit above public good. Becoming a nonprofit brings the paper fully in line with its values. —TRACY BAIM

CITY LIFE



SIGHTSEEING

A trip back in time to the World's Columbian Exposition

Travel tips for Chicago from 1893 (yes, you should tip your servers).

In November 1893, the journalist Kate Field asked what should be done with the buildings of the World's Columbian Exposition, the great majority of which were built as temporary structures. "Apply the torch and let it go down in a day," was one reply. Field felt a twinge of sadness for the millions who hadn't had the chance to see with their own eyes "the greatest achievement of the nineteenth century."

If you could go back in time to see the World's Columbian Exposition, how would you prepare for life in Chicago? Here are some suggestions drawn from travel guidebooks for Chicago and from advice printed in newspapers from around the world.

Brace yourself for a more homogenous city

According to the 1890 census, Chicago was 98.6 percent white. (For contrast, according to 2018 census figures, Chicago is currently 32.7 percent white.) The *English-German Guide of the City of Chicago and the World's Columbian Exposition*, a guidebook target-

ed at tourists from Germany, noted that visitors might get by in Chicago speaking only German. Nonwhites might not face the same rigid segregation as in the American south, but private businesses such as hotels and restaurants could find excuses to turn customers away. "No sensible white person feels aggrieved when he rides from Van Buren street to the Fair grounds . . . on a seat shared by a decent colored person," explained one Chicago newspaper in an editorial against a vaudeville theater that had required Blacks to sit in a "colored gallery," which cost three times more than general admission. In her autobiography, Ida B. Wells recalled going to lunch with Frederick Douglass near the close of the fair. She brought up a nice restaurant across the street, one that didn't serve Blacks. Douglass grasped her arm and said, "Come, let's go there." The waiters at the Boston Oyster House seemed "paralyzed." The owner of the restaurant recognized Douglass and greeted him warmly. This was enough to get service.

Dress practically

If you want to go back to 1893 to escape slob wearing shorts, you should know that there were limits to style in 1893. "There is nothing more disagreeable than the dude at the fair. He is entirely alone in his glory, for nobody who has any brains at all dresses up for tramping around in the dust with a crowd of at least 100,000 people," the *Washington Star* noted.

A correspondent from the *Pall Mall* ➔

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November 21
12pm-1pm
Democratic Party Office -
Edgewater
5539 N. Broadway Ave.

School House on the Rocks
November 21
5:15pm - 7:30pm
Merchandise Mart Plaza
222 W. Merchandise Mart
Plaza, 1871 Auditorium

Rally on Human Rights: Democracy and Community Control of Police
November 22
7pm - 9pm
CTU Center
1901 W. Carroll St.

13th annual "Feed a Teen" Thanksgiving Dinner
November 23
1pm - 5pm
Kids Off the Block, Inc.
11623 S Michigan Ave.

ILVOTE-Chicago Voter Registrar Training
November 29
3pm - 4pm
Board of Elections
Commissioners,
City of Chicago
69 W. Washington St.

MLK Kickoff Lighting Event at Cole Park
December 1
1pm - 6 pm
Nat King Cole Park
361 E. 85th St. (85th King Dr.)

MPC Roundtable Toward Universal Mobility: Charting a Path to Improve Transportation Accessibility
December 3
12:30pm - 1:30pm
Union League Club of Chicago
65 W Jackson Blvd.

The Virtual Wall: How the Trump Administration Built a Wall with Regulations and Outsourcing
December 3
7pm - 9pm
KAM Isaiah Israel
1100 E. Hyde Park Blvd.

Black Lives Matter & Beauty Bar Constellations not Cops: Astrology & Trivia to benefit BLM
December 9
7pm - 10pm
Beauty Bar Chicago
1444 W. Chicago Ave.

Women in Green Building Leadership Luncheon
December 4
11am - 1:30pm
Holiday Inn Mart Plaza
350 W. Mart Center Dr.

Sunrise Movement Chicago- December Hub Meeting
December 4
6pm - 7:30pm
Chinatown Library
2100 S Wentworth Ave.

Moms Demand Action - Chicago NW - December Social Gathering
December 5
6:30pm - 9:30pm
Old Irving Brewing Co.
4419 W. Montrose Ave.

Chicago Climate Strike
December 6
11am - 1pm
Crown Fountain,
Millennium Park
201 E. Randolph St.
(between Michigan Ave. and Columbus Ave.)

CITY LIFE

continued from 3

Gazette told its London readers to bring galoshes. The *English-German Guide* concurred: Chicago streets "are dirty to an extent incomprehensible to Europeans." Street fashion in this part of America, the guidebook maintained, was *sehr einfach*: very simple. "Jewelry and loud clothing ought to be avoided, the attention of dangerous characters being attracted by them."

Have a flexible budget

When the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition first opened, visitors complained about price gouging. "From one end of the land to the other a protest has arisen against the thieves, brigands, robbers, and pickpockets who pose as waiters, stall keepers, refreshment contractors, hotel proprietors, and railway directors," wrote a correspondent for the *Otago Witness*, a New Zealand paper.

Though costs decreased over the summer, it was still easy to blow a fortune at the Columbian Exposition itself. The *Santa Fe Daily New Mexican* reported one visitor's deluxe day trip. Paying to be wheeled around the fairgrounds in rolling chairs and to navigate lagoon waters in gondolas, the traveler "bought catalogues and guidebooks, saw all the wonders of the Midway Pleasance [sic], had lunch and dinner at the swell cafes and brought innumerable souvenirs." He shelled out \$30 for the day—a total that when adjusted for inflation is about \$855.

Disciplined time-traveling tourists should be able to get by in Chicago on a reasonable budget. In addition to the hotels charging \$6 to \$10 a day for palatial rooms, there were also "cheap (not necessarily also nasty) 50 cent or \$1" accommodations, according to Rand McNally's *Pocket Guide to Chicago*. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* estimated that frugal travelers might get by on \$2 a day, though it was possible to live comfortably in Chicago for \$3 a day. The *English-German Guide* claimed that "tipping the employes of restaurants or hotels, one of the nuisances of European countries, does not exist in Chicago."

Where to eat

The *Scranton Republican* reported that visitors might buy a "very nice" lunch consisting of two ham sandwiches, a pickle, and a slice of cake and pie outside the fairgrounds for 25 cents. On the other end of the scale, Rand McNally's *Bird's Eye Views and Guide to Chicago* recommended the Auditorium Café

("intended for those who desire to eat well and pay well for it") and the Great Northern Café ("without equal in Chicago in the luxury of its appointments"). For dessert, there was Gunther's, a "palace of sweets" on State Street. "The interior is Venetian, the tints rich cream-color and gold," raved Rand McNally.

Chicago also had restaurants that served women exclusively. Rand McNally suggested Mrs. Clark Co. Lunch Room, "which, owing to the excellent quality of the food, the good service, and the reasonable rates, has become a favorite with Chicago women."

What to see

Not everyone who visited Chicago in 1893 cared for the place. "You know the proverb: 'Scratch a Chicago man, you find a Red Indian,'" wrote Regnold Reid, an upper-class jagoff from Cupar, Scotland. Chicago "is the last place I should choose in America to live in." Even as he decried Chicago as an unfinished, uncivilized place, Regnold was wowed by the Auditorium Theatre.

If you're using a time machine to visit Chicago in 1893, you'll probably want to skip the Auditorium and head to one of many Chicago's great lost buildings. With its massive skylight and gorgeous mosaics, the Burnham & Root-designed Masonic Temple at Randolph and State stood, as Rand McNally exclaimed, "an object of pride to every Chicagoan and a thing of wondering admiration to the visitor within our gates." The *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, an Australian paper, enthused that its notoriously fast express elevators gave the sensation as "if all the breath were being driven out of your body."

While Regnold Reid thought that the Chicago fire was a godsend for destroying the "wooden slums" of Chicago, other tourists in 1893 wanted to see the rough side of the city. The *Pocket Guide to Chicago* offers tips for going slumming. Rand McNally describes the rabble who haunt some of the beer halls of the west side as "longhaired, of alien birth, entirely innocent of honest work or any kind of bathing." For "wine, women, and song," Rand McNally suggests Engel's Pavilion, on Clark near Division, "where for the sum of 25 cents or so the visitor can hear comic songs amid libations and smoke."

If, somehow, you do find yourself at Engel's Pavilion in 1893, you should pass on the advice given by the *English-German Guide*. No matter what year it is, always tip your servers.

—JEFF NICHOLS

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READER

NEWS & POLITICS



Any investigation into
Madigan and Foxx is a coup!
COURTESY GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND
STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

POLITICS

The Republican way

Imagine covering Madigan and Foxx the way Republican-run media cover Trump.

By BEN JORAVSKY

As a long-standing liberal reformer, I should be outraged by the ongoing federal corruption probe that's encircled key members of my beloved Democratic Party.

The probe includes, but is not limited to, Illinois house speaker Michael Madigan, former state representative Luis Arroyo, state senator Marty Sandoval, Alderman Ed Burke, Alderwoman Carrie Austin, etc.

I should write a few hundred words of righteous indignation, maybe call it the Chicago Way. And quote someone saying "only in Chicago." And connect it to tales of sordidness going back to the days of Boss Daley.

But instead I'm going to try something different. I'm going to cover Democratic scandals as though I were a Republican covering Trump's scandals.

Like I was, I don't know, a Republican writer for a Republican newspaper. We've got one in town. So I have a model or two to emulate.

As you probably know, the new standard for Republican coverage of Trump is that there is no standard. Anything goes.

I'm not just talking about abuse of power, with Trump shaking down the Ukrainian president.

Or theft: Trump just pleaded guilty to misusing about \$2 million from his charity—the Donald J. Trump Foundation. Trump took donations from suckers dumb enough to think he'd spend it on helping veterans and used it to pay off business debts and buy a portrait of himself for one of his hotels.

Barely a word from Republicans about this. What's the matter, cat got your tongue?

And it's not just corruption. Apparently, ➔

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NEWS & POLITICS

continued from 5

the Republican Party now sanctions sexual assault. In the last couple of years, at least 17 women have accused Trump of everything from rape to sexual harassment.

That sound you hear from the Moral Majority is silence.

Anyway, I figure—if it's good enough for Trumpsters, it's good enough for me. So let's see what happens when I cover Democratic corruption the Republican way.

I will make an exception for Alderman Ed Burke. I figure he gets what he deserves because he was Trump's property tax lawyer. As for the others . . .

I'll attack the accusers and defend the accused. I'll call it a coup. I'll talk the way Republicans talk about Adam Schiff and Nancy Pelosi and other congressional Democrats who lead the impeachment inquiry.

I'll say they're trying to accomplish through federal investigators what they couldn't do at the ballot box—beat Michael Madigan.

I'll ignore the mountain of evidence that powerful Democrats were swapping this for that. Just the way the Republicans have ignored the mountain of evidence against Trump.

Instead, I'll change the subject. I'll say—let's investigate the investigators. Who are those federal agents—members of the Deep State—who have launched this unwarranted attack against Madigan?

And what are their connections to the Republicans? Any Republicans, at any time.

Have they donated to Republican campaigns? No? Well, then do they have wives or husbands or children or uncles or aunts who have donated to past Republican campaigns?

And even if they don't, I'll keep asking the questions as though they have. You repeat a lie enough, and someone will believe it's true.

I'll publish the names of investigators and whistle-blowers so my followers can intimidate them with threatening e-mails and tweets.

I'll mock the investigators and whistle-blowers with insulting nicknames. I'll disparage them on a daily basis. When they hold press conferences, I'll encourage Madigan to issue nasty tweets about the prosecutors.

When the Republicans call that witness tampering, I'll say innocent people have nothing to hide.

Why stop with Madigan? Let's throw Cook County state's attorney Kim Foxx into the mix. Wouldn't that be fun? On any given day there must be at least four *Tribune* writers trying to

bring her down.

Have any of them been in contact with the investigators looking into Smollettgate?

If so, let's see their phone records and e-mails. I'll encourage Foxx to stonewall investigators by refusing to comply with their subpoenas and ordering her underlings not to testify. Just like Trump is doing with his White House aides.

Let's see what happens if Foxx plays hardball like Trump. If she does, I'll just keep my mouth shut about it. Pretend it's not going on.

Instead, I'll make up stuff about Sheila O'Brien, the former judge who pushed for an investigation into Foxx. That's what a Republican would do if the roles were reversed.

I'll throw stuff against the wall and see what sticks. For instance, when the feds leak tape of Luis Arroyo allegedly taking a bribe from a state senator, I'll want to know who gave the feds the right to tape Arroyo's private conversations. What secret underground tribunal run by Stalin-like operatives convened to snatch away Arroyo's constitutional rights?

I'll say we should subpoena the federal investigators who are subpoenaing the Democrats. What secrets are they hiding?

I'll close by repeating myself—repetition is the key. As the Republicans have demonstrated. And so . . .

This investigation into Madigan and the Democrats is a coup. A witch hunt. A hoax. The worst abomination of justice in the history of the world. As bad as McCarthyism. No, worse.

I'll call it an attempt by Republicans to do by secret federal investigation what they couldn't do at the polls: beat Madigan's aldermen or state reps.

I'll say they can't beat the Democrats at the county or state level. They can't even beat them in DuPage County. So they turned to the Deep State to undo our democratically sanctioned elections.

I'll offer Republicans a challenge. Hey, Republicans, you want to get rid of Michael Madigan? Here's what you do: Go to the polls and vote. That's how we do things here.

I'll say until you beat Madigan where it counts, stop crying like the little Republican babies that you are.

Oh, yeah, it's fun writing a column like a Trump-loving Republican. Easy, too. It's like playing tennis without a net or out-of-bounds lines.

You can whack the ball all over the place and still pretend you've scored a point.

@joravben

6 CHICAGO READER • NOVEMBER 21, 2019



PAULA JACKSON

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

‘The big house and the picket fence’

Tonya Crowder still dreams that she and her fiancé, Roosevelt Myles—who’s been in prison for decades fighting what he says is a wrongful conviction—will one day build a life together somewhere “nice, quiet, and simple.”

By **MARI COHEN**

Tonya Crowder is a good cook, and last Christmas was extra special. She expected to have her fiancé, Roosevelt Myles, join her at home for the holiday for the first time.

So she drew up a menu: greens, chicken and dressing, macaroni and cheese, sweet potatoes, pie, caramel cake.

But Myles never got to eat it. In fact, he still hasn’t had a chance to taste any of Crowder’s

cooking, even though it’s been nearly seven years since they became engaged. Throughout their relationship—and for 20 years before that—he’s been incarcerated, serving time for a murder he claims he didn’t commit. He says Chicago Police Department detectives—including a notorious now-retired cop who racked up dozens of complaints and helped cover up the Laquan McDonald shooting—coerced witnesses into testifying against him.

The Illinois Appellate Court has already ruled that Myles deserves a new hearing. But that was back in 2000. Since then his case has languished on the desk of public defenders, and the judge and prosecutor have failed to move it along. Even in a painfully slow court system, that kind of delay is unheard of.

By fall 2018, though, 53-year-old Crowder had reason to believe that Myles might be home for Christmas. She’d helped Myles get pro bono representation from Jennifer Bonjean, a successful civil rights lawyer who’d

filed a new petition on his behalf. A November date was set for Cook County judge Dennis J. Porter—the same judge who’d presided over Myles’s original trial in 1992—to finally rule on whether to grant him his new hearing. Crowder had learned her fiancé’s case back to front, and she was confident they would soon start their life together at home.

“According to everything that I see, the only decision that [the judge] can make is either ‘Come home,’ or even if he does continue to start the hearing, they should release him because he was wrongfully sentenced,” she says of her mind-set before last year’s hearing. “So everything said come home to me.”

Crowder and Myles’s sister, Sharon Myles-Stephens, made the three-hour trek from Peoria, where they live, to Chicago’s criminal courthouse for the ruling. But nothing happened. Porter pushed back his decision again, to December 17. When Crowder returned to Chicago in December, Porter delayed the case again. Feeling discouraged, Crowder no longer planned to make Christmas dinner. But Myles encouraged her to cook anyway. So she did, hoping maybe she could thaw the food for Myles in January.

Instead, on January 8, Judge Porter delayed the ruling a third time. The following month, Myles was brought into the courtroom in handcuffs; Crowder sat in the audience. But Myles says he knew something was wrong: Porter wouldn’t look him in the eye. In a brief announcement, Porter said that he was denying Myles’s petition for a hearing on his innocence claim. He also ruled that there would be no changes to Myles’s sentence.

The decision was just one of the many rulings that make up Porter’s regular workday as a judge, a job he’s had for 31 years. But for Myles and Crowder the moment was earth-shattering. “You know what the worst part was?” Myles says of that day. “Coming back from the county jail on the highway, coming back here, sitting down thinking, and then reading that order by the judge and saying, ‘I can’t believe he did this.’ And looking over to my left I see Tonya in the car passing us. I’m supposed to be in that car. So my heart just broke straight off with her.”

Myles and Crowder talked on the phone every chance they had. She visited him once a week; they got into passionate debates but rarely fought. He did his best, from prison, to act like a father to her children. She knew his case better than anyone in his family. She had a wedding dress picked out. Still, the blow of having his petition denied almost broke them up. “Without us believing in the Lord and our strength and our love for one another, we ➔

continued from 7

probably would've been separated," Myles says.

Today, Crowder and Myles remain together, making their relationship work as well as they can. His fight to prove his innocence is far from over: last month, Bonjean filed a brief appealing Porter's decision. "I've never been more confident in a reversal," she told me in a phone interview. In the meantime, with all the credit that he's accrued for good behavior, Myles could finish his sentence early next year.

"I don't know what's at the end of the rainbow. It started off so sweet. It's just been a long process," Crowder says. "But at the end, it could be so sweet. And I don't want to miss my miracle. I don't want to quit before the miracle happens."

I've corresponded with Myles regularly on the phone and through a special prison e-mail service since last spring. It's not always easy to connect—the prison phone system limits calls to 30 minutes, and if I miss the call there's no way for me to call back. But over time, I've learned a lot about Myles's life and what it takes for him and Crowder to maintain a relationship despite the barriers posed by incarceration and the emotional toll of fighting a conviction. Over the summer, I was approved to visit Myles, and allowed to bring a recorder and notebook in to sit with him for as long as I wanted in a small windowless room in the prison. Afterward, I visited Crowder at her home in Peoria.

Myles has white hair and a white, well-trimmed beard—he says Crowder once accurately described him as a "gentle teddy bear." The 59-year-old speaks slowly and passionately and can at times get downright poetic in describing his experience. (Tonya, he says, "was my legs when I couldn't hold myself up. She was my voice when I couldn't be heard.")

Roosevelt Myles Jr. was born on the west side of Chicago, in West Garfield Park, in 1960, when the neighborhood was awash with manufacturing jobs. His mother was a cook; his father worked as a butcher, bricklayer, and insurance salesman. He was close with his sister Sharon, barely a year older and the "smart one." He also spent time with his three half-siblings. In the summers, Myles visited his grandparents in the south or stayed in Chicago doing odd jobs in the neighborhood.

"He was funny and liked to make people laugh, and very protective of me," Sharon Myles-Stephens recalls of her brother. "In the neighborhood, he would go around helping all the old people."

Myles started working at 16, first as a main-

tenance custodian worker contracted with the army reserve, later as a tree surgeon for the Chicago Park District and in the computer room for Helene Curtis, then the maker of Suave shampoo. He graduated high school and spent some time at Malcolm X College and DeVry University, studying computer science and prelaw, but he couldn't afford to stay enrolled.

Soon Myles tried his luck selling marijuana and PCP. "That was the beginning of an era that I never want to go back to," he says. His time on the streets led to arrests on drug charges and a three-year prison stint. Still, he remained close to his family. "He kept me company because my husband was a road driver," recalls his sister Patricia Milsap. "He'd come spend time with me and my kids and have fun."

By his late 20s, Myles's life was "spiraling down," he says. "Every step I'd take forward, two would go backwards." He was in a serious relationship, but knew he wasn't settled enough for children yet. After getting out of prison, he moved to Peoria, where Myles-Stephens lived. One morning when he went to the store, he was ambushed by robbers, who took his ring, watch, and chain and shot him in the leg. When his mother found out, she insisted he return to Chicago, and he came back to live on the west side.

On the evening of November 16, 1992, at the age of 32, Myles left home to hang out at the Dragon's Den Motorcycle Club. "That was the last day I was in the world," he says.

Around 2 AM, 16-year-old Shaharian Brandon, a sophomore at Near North High School and an All-American athlete, and 15-year-old Octavius Morris left Morris's house near Washington and Cicero, not far from where Myles's parents lived, to get something to eat. According to what Morris later told police, a man crawled out from under her front porch, yelled "This is a stickup!," and pulled out a gun, as another man hid under the porch behind him. The man with the gun shot Brandon, hitting him twice in the upper chest and killing him. Morris ran away, hearing more shots ring out. Later, she returned to the scene.

Myles says he heard the shots when he was leaving his friend's house blocks away, where he'd been hanging out after leaving the club. He passed by the crime scene on his way to buy cigarettes, and two police officers stopped him and brought him over to their squad cars, where Morris was waiting. Morris said that Myles was not the shooter. The police released him.

On December 7, three detectives, including Anthony Wojcik, visited Morris at her house to interview her about the crime again. Ac-

cording to a police report completed two days later, Morris first repeated her original story, then began to cry and said that she did indeed know the shooter, and that it was Myles, but she had been too afraid to tell the truth. She said that she had been mistaken about seeing a second man under the porch.

That evening, Wojcik and another officer arrested Myles and drove him to the Area 5 Violent Crimes Unit, headquarters for detectives tasked with solving crimes on the city's west side. In 2012, Area 5 was closed as a cost consolidation measure, and in recent years, Reynaldo Guevara, one of the officers who worked out of Area 5 in the 90s, has been exposed as having framed at least 51 men for crimes they didn't commit. But at the time the station was in full operation, its reputation untainted.

"I don't know what's at the end of the rainbow. It started off so sweet. It's just been a long process. But at the end, it could be so sweet. And I don't want to miss my miracle."

—Tonya Crowder

And back then, Myles wasn't especially wary of the police. Growing up, he'd participated in the youth "police explorer" program; he had a friend who was a detective. "The people I thought would protect me were against me that night," he says.

Myles says he was taken to an interview room in Area 5 on the second floor and handcuffed to a ring on the wall. Detective Wojcik interrogated Myles about Brandon's murder. Wojcik began beating him with a phonebook and flashlight, Myles says. For 36 hours he was kept in the same room, facing intermittent beatings from Wojcik and other officers as police attempted to get him to confess. He refused. The following day, police placed him in a lineup and invited Octavius Morris to identify the shooter; she picked Myles.

Finally, on December 9, Myles was transferred to Cook County Jail, where for the first time in the 48 hours since his arrest he was given food and access to a phone. The state's

attorney's office charged him with attempted robbery and murder.

Over the next four years, while Myles awaited trial in the Cook County Jail, Morris once again changed her statement. In 1993, investigators for the public defender's office obtained a written statement from Morris that Myles was not the shooter, and that she had consistently told police—and her mother, who verified this account—that the shooter was light-skinned (Myles is dark-skinned). She said she had only named him because police kept coming to her house and bothering her about whether Myles was the shooter.

At first, Myles didn't understand why he was being fingered for the murder, and had a hard time getting information from his lawyer. As he learned about his case, it was hard to come to terms with the amount of prison time he faced if convicted. But once he explained the details of his case—including the flip-flopping witness—to his fellow jail inmates, they began to believe in his innocence, and he no longer had to worry about beatings from members of the gang that Brandon, the victim, had belonged to. Fellow inmates in the law library showed him how to do legal research on his case. He learned to type and started studying the law on his own.

But he couldn't control the behavior of the state's star witness. In 1996, when she took the stand at Myles's jury trial, Morris flipped once more. This time she again identified Myles as the shooter, and said she'd only changed her story because she was afraid of him.

There are other witnesses that might have effectively countered Morris's story, Myles says. Three men—Michael Hooker, Derrick Floyd, and Hubert Floyd—were with him at his friend's house when the shooting happened, and could have testified on his behalf. But Myles's public defender didn't put any of them on the stand, for reasons that are still unclear.

The jury found Morris's testimony convincing, and convicted Myles of attempted armed robbery and murder. He was sentenced to 60 years in prison, 50 for murder and 10 for the attempted armed robbery.

Stuck inside Stateville Correctional Center, Myles decided to turn his life around. In 1997, he became a Hebrew Israelite and quit smoking and drugs. He took advantage of every certification opportunity available to him from behind bars, including a paralegal certification course. In his 27 years of incarceration, he's become certified in roles from hazardous waste removal professional to apprentice baker, and he's completed a variety of courses, from Healthy Thinking to Keys to

Personal and Professional Success.

The Illinois Appellate Court upheld Myles's conviction on appeal. But he still had an avenue to try to prove his innocence. In Illinois, inmates can file postconviction petitions, which allow them to argue that the conviction violated their constitutional rights. These are usually filed from prison, without an attorney. In 1999, Myles filed a postconviction petition alleging, among other things, that his lawyer had been ineffective when he failed to call the three alibi witnesses to the stand at trial. His trial judge, Dennis J. Porter, denied the petition, and Myles appealed.

Then, on December 29, 2000, the Illinois Appellate Court reversed Porter and ruled that Myles's petition had merit. "We conclude that petitioner has presented the gist of a meritorious claim of a constitutional violation," the opinion read, "and that he is entitled to an evidentiary hearing." The ruling meant that Myles would now be appointed a lawyer to help him file another petition and present evidence that his conviction should be overturned.

This was a huge victory for Myles, and seemed to suggest he could soon see his name

cleared. Instead, however, as Melissa Segura chronicled for BuzzFeed News in 2017, two decades would pass without an evidentiary hearing. After the successful appellate decision, Myles was assigned to a public defender who was supposed to file his next petition, but as the years went by she didn't do anything for his case. In an interview with Segura, the public defender, Marianne Branch, admitted that personal issues kept her from devoting time to her client's case, and said that the public defender postconviction unit was full of burned-out lawyers who didn't take assignments seriously.

In 2011—11 years after the appellate court decision—another public defender took over the case. This lawyer, Jeffrey Walker, promised Myles that he was working hard on the case, but, overworked, he had little time for it. With the help of an investigator, he did successfully get Michael Hooker, one of the men who'd been with Myles at the time of the murder, to sign an affidavit saying he'd seen Myles exit their friend's house right after the shots were fired elsewhere. The delay had already hurt the case, though: Walker learned that Ronnie Bracey, the friend whose house Myles

had been at, was now dead. The two other witnesses, Hubert and Derrick Floyd, could not be found. Then, in 2017, Walker died, and the case was transferred to yet another public defender.

In the meantime, Myles did his own work on the case from prison. He wrote letters to agencies and elected officials, from the Cook County Board president to the mayor to the governor to the Department of Justice, and to organizations providing legal representation for the wrongfully convicted (none responded). He filed Freedom of Information Act request after Freedom of Information Act request for details on the police officers involved in his case, his name filling up the record request logs.

After two and a half years in Stateville, Myles was transferred to Menard Correctional Center, far downstate on the banks of the Mississippi. In 2006, his supervisor at his tailor job became warden, and Myles, who got along well with the prison staff, asked if he could be transferred to a prison near Peoria to be closer to family. His sister Sharon had lived there since college, and his parents had recently moved there too, after retiring. Within two

weeks, he was transferred to his current home in the medium-security Illinois River Correctional Center, near the tiny town of Canton, just a 30-minute drive from Peoria.

At Illinois River, Myles works in a bakery, making bread and sweets for prisons across the state. For a long time, this meant 12-hour days, five days a week, starting at 4 AM. At Illinois River, he's tight with the prison staff, who support his fight to prove his innocence. When we met this summer to talk in the small room, several staff members stopped by to tap on the glass and wave hello or goodbye.

Meanwhile, in 2012, Peoria native Tonya Crowder needed knee surgery. Her nurse at the doctor's office was Sharon Myles-Stephens, Roosevelt's sister. Myles-Stephens and Crowder would talk when she came in, and Crowder was candid about her past. "She was very humble about where she'd been and very strong about where she was going," Myles-Stephens recalls. She sensed that Crowder might be a good match for Myles, so she asked for Crowder's number on behalf of her brother, telling her he was a "good guy who had been put in a bad ➔

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position.”

“So I was like, ‘Where’s he at? That you’re doing all the talking?’ And she was like, ‘Well, he’s incarcerated.’ And I was like, ‘Oh Lord, not that,’” says Crowder. But then Myles-Stephens explained that her brother had been insisting on his innocence since he’d first arrived in prison. “I was like, ‘Well, I guess it’s just a letter.’ And I gave her my address.”

Myles wrote to Crowder soon after, in August 2012. Myles says he was just looking for a new friend to correspond with. He’d had romantic relationships with women from within prison before, but says his partners weren’t honest with him and those relationships didn’t feel sustainable.

When Crowder got his first letter, she was still hesitant about talking to this man she didn’t know, and she was busy—she’d just had knee replacement surgery. So she ignored the letter. Myles didn’t want to write again if Crowder wasn’t interested, but Myles-Stephens told him to try one more time. He reluctantly sent another. Three weeks later, Crowder responded. They began exchanging letters back and forth, getting to know one another. In late fall, Myles started calling Crowder from prison. Finally, in early December, Crowder wrote him a one-line letter stating that she would visit him that Friday.

“He got the letter like on Thursday,” Crowder says. “And he said he was running around like a girl getting ready for date, trying to get a haircut and a shave.”

The visit went well—they had a lot to talk about. At the end, Myles walked her to the door of the visiting room, and she gave him a brief kiss. Then she surprised him by giving him a second kiss before leaving. Myles was impressed. “He was like, ‘When you doubled up on me, I was hooked,’” Crowder says, laughing. “I was like OK, whatever.”

“I thought about the conversation that we

had about life and things that we have been through,” Myles says. “I said, ‘Wow, we can share each other’s thoughts for the rest of our lives.’”

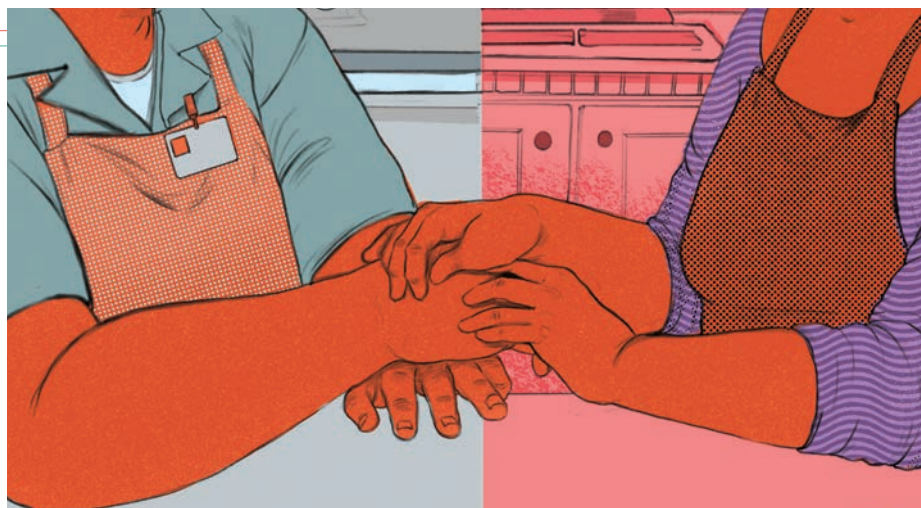
After that, Crowder made weekly visits to see Myles. They just clicked. They’d dealt with similar health problems; they’d both overcome struggles with addiction; they seemed to just get each other. They also had interests in common, like sports and cooking.

“Sometimes I’d write to her about something, and the next day I’d get a letter in the mail and she wrote about the same thing,” Myles says. “So our thoughts cross in the air, and it’s scary, but it’s good.”

Myles loves that Crowder is smart, outspoken, and stubborn—he calls her a “mule.” The two like to get into passionate debates, but they don’t argue. Crowder appreciates that Myles doesn’t ask her for money and is family oriented. Unlike other men she’s known, he isn’t out to get something from her. He knows she’s a single mom, and he supports himself. At first, Crowder scheduled her visits with Myles when her three kids—Jenise, Justice, and JaRon—were at school. But soon he asked to meet them, and Tonya brought them in for a visit. While she was heating up food from the vending machines in the visiting room, Myles spoke to each child, asking if they would be OK with him marrying their mom. They all gave him their approval.

Because of his incarceration, Myles never got the chance to have his own children—“They took that from me,” he says. So he’s thrown himself into being a parent to Crowder’s kids as best as he can. He calls them regularly. He’s especially close with Justice, Crowder’s middle daughter, who is now 23. The two of them both have big foreheads, and so they jokingly greet each other by bumping foreheads.

“We connected automatically,” Justice says. “Everybody there really thinks that I’m his



PAULA JACKSON

daughter. He treats me like nothing but his daughter. I can talk to him about anything. My biological father wasn’t ever really there, but when I met [Myles], he wanted to be there for me no matter what.”

Jenise was hesitant at first, but now she and Myles are close; they talk at least twice a week on the phone. “He’s very down-to-earth. Very honest,” she says. “You can’t ask for more. He’s a joy to be around.”

On January 25, 2013—not even two months after they’d first met in person—Myles proposed to Crowder during a visit. He got permission from a correctional officer to get down on his knees to ask for her hand, but he was too embarrassed. (“I should’ve done it. I regret that right now,” he says.) She said yes. Myles ordered a temporary ring for Crowder in the mail, from a catalog available to inmates offering jewelry at inflated prices. Later she picked out her own ring, and Myles paid her back.

“I’ve never been married because I haven’t found anybody on this earth throughout my lifetime that was marriage material,” Crowder says. “And I know that I am a good one. And I just never had a good man. I believe Roosevelt could be that guy.”

These days, Myles calls Crowder anytime he can get to the prison phone, and Crowder usually visits on Friday afternoons for four

hours. During that time, which is confined to the brightly painted visiting room, where Myles has to stay seated at an assigned table, they chat, play cards, and share a meal from the prison vending machine. Over the summer, a few weeks after interviewing Myles and Crowder in person separately, I joined them for a visit. It was a hot, blistering day, but the air-conditioning in most of the building wasn’t working; perhaps because Myles is a favorite, staff assigned us a table under a fan. Myles recounted his recent experience talking to investigators from the wrongful conviction TV show *Reasonable Doubt*. We ate microwave pizzas, and Crowder and Myles taught me to play rummy as they jokingly made fun of one another. When Myles talked about being a lifelong Bulls fan, Crowder shook her head and called him a “scrub for life.”

When they first got together, Myles encouraged Crowder to learn the details of his case on her own. “He said, ‘Don’t believe anything I say.’ He said, ‘I can show you everything I’m talking about,’” she recalls. “You don’t have to have knowledge of the law. Just have common sense.” Once she knew the story, Crowder and her kids became warriors on Myles’s behalf. They made flyers and T-shirts with information about Myles’s

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case. With access to electronic communication and faster mail service, Crowder helped Myles reach out to potential advocates and lawyers. Crowder also befriended Myles's family. She learned that her kids had actually known Myles-Stephens's kids—Myles's nephews—growing up. "Everybody just jelled," Crowder says. After the engagement, her family was always invited to birthday parties and holidays with the Myles family.

"In the beginning, you know, he said that [his release] could be ten years, five years, or in a day. And he felt like at that point that he had a chance at something happening that year. And so I guess in my mind that's all I heard," Crowder says. "I never imagined I would still be sitting in the same place six years later."

Crowder still acts as a voice for Myles outside the prison—she was the one who reached out to me to let me know about his case. But as time went on, the initial flurry of activity slowed. "When you keep trying and trying and trying and nobody seems to listen or support, it gets discouraging," she says.

The years of waiting have led Myles to be consistently vigilant, always trying to move things forward. But that impulse can sometimes cause tension with Crowder, since he has a tendency to constantly nag and remind her, whether it's about something she's working on for his case or something personal, like her results from a doctor's visit. "That's the way he's had to live," she says. "But I let him know sometimes that just is not necessary in our relationship."

In August 2016, Myles was having a regular phone conversation with his mom, Martha, joking about how his dad, Roosevelt Sr., had brought her pancakes and sausage on a stick to eat. Two days later, Myles heard from his sister that Martha was in the hospital. He talked to her briefly on the phone and could tell something was off. Martha passed away from a sepsis infection the night before Crowder was to visit Myles. "All the way down the highway, I prayed," Crowder says. "What am I gonna say to him?"

That day, Myles saw Crowder sitting in the small room where he and I did our interview, rather than the regular visiting room. That small room is reserved for press visits or visits when there's a death in the family. "He caught a glimpse of me. And I looked over and he was like, 'Hey, baby.' And he stopped and his face just went blank. And he was like, 'My mom?' And I nodded my head yes," Crowder recalls. "And he just like fell out against the wall. Because that was the prayer he prayed the hardest, was to be able to see his parents and help

them. And so that was the hardest thing I ever had to do in this relationship."

Myles was granted permission to view his mother's body, which helped him get some closure. Crowder read a poem at the funeral on Myles's behalf. A few months after Martha died, Roosevelt Sr., who had been married to his wife for 55 years, fell ill with a kidney infection, which landed him in the hospital, then a nursing home, where he caught pneumonia. Crowder spent time with him in the hospital and was able to get him to eat her cooking—a big feat, because Roosevelt Sr. usually only wanted to eat his wife's cooking. He died in March 2017, just half a year after his wife's death.

The loss of both parents crushed Myles. He thinks that if he had been out of prison his mother would've opened up to him about how sick she was, and that he could've convinced her to go to the hospital sooner. He also thinks he may have been able to get the nursing home and hospital to take better care of his dad. "I'm not going to say I could have prevented what the Lord has planned for you," he says. "But some way, somehow I'd be more accepting to her death knowing that I did all I can. And right now I can't say that, because I'm here."

In 2017 Myles and Crowder got some good news. Myles had read about Jennifer Bonjean, a lawyer who among many other victories successfully helped three men overturn their convictions after they were framed by notorious CPD detective Reynaldo Guevara. Myles wrote to her twice, but didn't hear back. So he asked Crowder to give her a call and pass along his files. Bonjean was appalled by the delay in Myles's case. She agreed to take him on as a pro bono client starting in July 2017. After so many years of negligent representation, he finally had a lawyer willing to fight for him.

In June 2018, Bonjean filed a new postconviction petition on Myles's behalf, attaching the affidavit of witness Michael Hooker. Bonjean also argued that the original trial attorney was negligent because he should have presented evidence that pointed to another man, Octavius Morris's ex-boyfriend, as the perpetrator, since he had previously threatened victim Shaharian Brandon. Furthermore, Bonjean presented a litany of evidence, much of it having emerged in the 20-plus years since Myles's original trial, that Detective Anthony Wojcik had engaged in a "pattern and practice" of abusing and framing suspects, which increases the likelihood that Wojcik might have coerced Morris to testify against Myles. In the Invisible Institute's Civilian Police ➔

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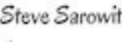
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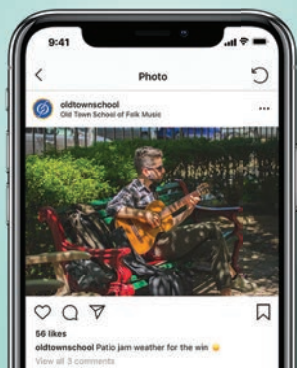
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Data Project, which allows users to access information from complaints against Chicago police officers, Wojcik has 44 complaints of misconduct, more than 92 percent of the other officers included in the database. Even before Myles's trial, in 1994, the Office of Professional Standards, at the time responsible for investigating police misconduct, sustained a complaint against Wojcik for breaking into his ex-girlfriend's apartment and beating the man she was with. This is especially noteworthy, because OPS very rarely found police officers guilty of misconduct.

Wojcik was also a key player in the Laquan McDonald cover-up. In October, Mayor Lori Lightfoot released reports from Inspector General Joseph Ferguson's 2017 investigation, which found that Wojcik destroyed and rewrote police reports from the shooting and "authored and approved" false statements. If Wojcik hadn't retired in 2016, the inspector general would have recommended he be fired. As it is, the report recommends Wojcik be stripped of his retirement badge and star and that he be removed from the Illinois Retired Officer Concealed Carry Program. (A lawyer for Wojcik did not respond to phone messages and e-mails seeking comment on Myles's case.)

Shortly after his petition was filed, Myles's legal team managed to track down Octavius Morris. In response to attempts to get in touch with her, Morris called Bonjean unexpectedly and said that Myles was not the shooter and that she had only testified against him because of pressure from Wojcik. That September, Morris signed a sworn affidavit reiterating that information: "Not a day goes by that I don't think about how [Myles] is in prison for a crime he did not do. The police and prosecutors were not interested in finding out the truth about who killed my friend. This event has nearly ruined my life."

Despite Myles's alibi witnesses, the evidence of Wojcik's misconduct, and the revelation from Morris, the Cook County State's Attorney's Office has continued to fight for Myles's conviction, even with progressive Kim Foxx at its head. (Originally, the Cook County State's Attorney's Conviction Integrity Unit agreed to review his case, but when nearly six months went by without progress, Bonjean moved forward with the regular petition process.)

The state filed a response to Myles's petition, claiming that Morris's affidavit was not actually new information since she had already denied that Myles was the shooter in the past, and that not all of the evidence of

Wojcik's misconduct was relevant to Myles's case. The state's attorney's office declined to comment on its position in the case for this article, given that an appeal is still pending. ("I'd love to know how the state's attorney defends objecting to a hearing when they must have known how crooked Wojcik is," Bonjean said in an e-mail.)

Then Dennis J. Porter made the February 13 decision that devastated Myles and his family. In his order granting the state's motion to dismiss Myles's petition, Porter said that Wojcik's misconduct in other cases was not necessarily relevant in this case, and that the new evidence from Morris could have been discovered sooner. He added that Michael Hooker's affidavit wouldn't have helped prove Myles's innocence anyway, because Hooker only saw Myles exit Bracey's house right after the shooting, not during it. And above all, Porter ruled that Myles had missed a deadline when filing his 1999 postconviction petition, as a result of which the petition would be invalid even if he supported its arguments.

Bonjean believes that Porter's decision contains glaring errors. Among other arguments, Bonjean's appeal alleges that Porter got a date wrong in claiming that Myles's petition was too late. And at this point in the legal procedure, the petition argues, Porter was not entitled to make factual judgments about whether Myles could have still committed the murder if Hooker's affidavit was true; instead, those judgments must be made after the defendant is allowed to present evidence at a hearing. If Porter had allowed Myles to win a hearing, the appeal says, he would have presented evidence that he could not have had enough time to commit the murder and run back to Bracey's house because his knee was still injured from the Peoria shooting.

Bonjean, who once clashed with Porter on another case, believes he has a personal interest in claiming that Myles is guilty, in order to avoid questions about how he allowed Myles's case to be delayed in his courtroom for so long. "The judge had an incentive, arguably, to deny him so he could say, 'Listen, no harm, no foul,'" Bonjean says. Porter did not return phone messages I left in his courtroom. (Illinois judges are forbidden, by Illinois Supreme Court rule, from commenting on pending cases.)

When I interviewed Crowder in her kitchen in Peoria this summer, shortly after my visit with Myles, she admitted she'd been feeling "angry, lonely, frustrated, resentful"—feelings that she had also shared with Myles—about how long it was taking to get to share a relationship unimpeded by his incarceration. She's still dreaming of "the big house and the

picket fence, to have a life someplace else, nice, quiet, simple," where they can "travel and love on the grandkids."

That dream had seemed close. Now, she was "back to having my blinders on, walking one day at a time, and not trying to suppress my feelings about the situation." She did perk up a bit, though, when talking about the color scheme she's picked out for her wedding—silver, peach, and green, chosen by her daughter, Justice. Her "something borrowed" for the wedding will be her dress, which was previously her sister's. "I'm just ready to wear it if I'm gonna wear it," she says. "Let's do this, man."

The wait has been tough for Myles-Stephens too. While she agreed to speak with me for this story, she admitted that it was hard to feel motivated to talk to a reporter after previous attention on Myles's case has had little bearing on what happened in the courts. She's "exhausted," she told me. "I'm tired of getting my hopes up and thinking this is gonna be it and this is gonna be it," she says. "I'll just be glad when he gets out."

As he waits for a ruling on his appeal, Myles might have an opportunity to get out of prison before the appellate court even makes a decision. When he was sentenced, people convicted of murder could shave an extra day off their sentence for every day served with good behavior. (That law has since changed.) That puts Myles's discharge date in 2022. But J.B. Pritzker recently signed a law giving inmates who have certain kinds of work experience more sentencing credit. Once in effect January 1, the law applied to Myles's case will mean that he has finished his sentence and could soon be released. He'll get to witness JaRon's high school graduation and meet Jenise's new baby. But getting out will still require Myles to report to the parole board for a time, and he'll still have the conviction on his record. So his fight for his exoneration will continue even after he leaves prison.

For now, Myles and his family are doing their best to be a family. In June, Crowder finally unfroze her Christmas cooking for a Father's Day visit from Jenise, Justice, and Jenise's husband and children, who now live in Louisiana. They feasted and held a baby shower for Jenise, who would soon give birth to her third child. Then on Monday after Father's Day, they had a "two-table" visit with Myles, meaning they got permission to use two tables in the visiting room for the whole family. It wasn't the Christmas dinner they'd originally hoped for but, Myles says, "it was special." 

 @maricohen95



RESTAURANT REVIEW

Chef Abu Hani is back in the kitchen at Sheeba Mandi House

Albany Park has a new Yemeni restaurant from a veteran Yemeni restaurateur.

By **MIKE SULA**

Abu Hani opened his first restaurant in 2000, when he was an ambitious 17-year-old student at Theodore Roosevelt High School.

Yemen Restaurant, situated on the corner of Lawrence and Avers in Albany Park, was Chicago's first to serve the food of the southernmost tip of the Arabian Peninsula. But it was more than that. It was a place where the small Yemeni community that had settled in the neighborhood gathered to play dominoes, shoot pool, drink chai, and just hang out—a least until Hani graduated, got married, and found more gainful employment driving trucks.

Yemeni restaurants have come and gone in the years since then, and Hani remains the progenitor of the cuisine in Chicago (he discouraged me from calling him its godfather, but still). He launched his second restau- ➔

Haneeth chicken and mutapq, kind of a proto Philly cheesesteak

by MATTHEW SCHWERIN
FOR CHICAGO READER

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continued from 13

rant, Shibam City, in 2009, and ran it till last year, when he sold it, intending to move on. But some monkeys you never shake off your back.

"I wanted to get out, but it pulled me back in," says Hani, who's now 36. "Once you're in the kitchen you never get out."

His first kitchen was his mother's. Growing up in Mayfair, he used to help her cook elaborate feasts to break the Ramadan fast. After marrying, he and his wife would take annual months-long trips back to Yemen, where he learned at his grandmother's side in the city of Aden, just west of the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which divides the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. That position made the port a necessary stop on the historic spice route, exposing the country's cuisine to its two main influences: the Ottoman and Mughal Empires.

The latter contributed biryani, which in turn spawned a whole family of meaty rice dishes: zurbian, kabsa, haneeth, and most notably *mandi*—big boney hunks of lamb or chicken

cooked underground or in a clay tandoor oven, mounded over simply spiced rice, and eaten with flatbread blistered in the same oven.

All these variants are on the menu at Sheeba Mandi House, Hani's latest restaurant. He'd opened a small spot on Devon earlier in the summer, but demand was so great he had to find a larger space. In early September, Sheeba took over the onetime Albany Park convenience store that most recently housed the Indo-Chinese WokNChop.

If you're new to Yemeni food these heaping platters might appear indistinguishable from each other. But there are key differences. According to Hani, the meat-and-rice dish *haneeth* takes hours longer to cook than *mandi*, and its foundational spice mix, *hawaij* (a blend of a dozen ingredients including cumin, clove, black pepper, turmeric, cardamom, and fenugreek), makes it generally more complex and variable.

It's fenugreek that's responsible for the dramatic effects posed by the burbling bowls of *saltah* and *fahsa*, meat and root vegetable



stews topped with an aromatic fenugreek foam, a trick hundreds of years older than Ferran Adrià. Hani is serving those along with less common stewy dishes such as *burr-mah*, built on the lamb broth that's the by-product of *mandi*, and *agda*, which has a thicker, saucier base of tomato and onions.

Among more common pan-Arabic mezes such as hummus and baba ghanoush, there's the snacktastic finger food *mutapq* (sometimes spelled *murtabak*), griddled pouches of thin flatbread enveloping tomato-sauced meat or eggs dosed with a blend of mayo and melted cheese. At Sheeba the beef version conjures up a kind of proto cheesesteak. If you ask me, Hani could sell nothing but *mutapq* and the restaurant would still be a destination.

As it stands, there's a fairly broad array of grilled plates built around kebabs, lamb chops, or whole butterflied fish, with sandwiches at lunch and a breakfast menu that includes the scrambled Yemeni version of shakshuka as well as mashed favas (*foul*), sauteed kidney beans (*fasolia*), and meatier sautes such as a liver-heart-kidney organ trio and *megalg*, a kind of curried shawarma with tomatoes, pepper, and onions. Desserts *ma'soob* and *arika* are puddinglike blends of bread, honey, cream, and nigella seeds baked with bananas or dates, respectively.

Hani still isn't content with sitting still in Albany Park. He also operates a food truck that parks at the O'Hare taxi staging zone. Don't get your hopes up about your next trip to the



Sheeba Mandi House; a cup of tea
© MATTHEW SCHWERIN FOR CHICAGO READER

airport, though—you can't access it unless you have a medallion. Haneeth, saltah, and *mutapq* are much more at home in Albany Park anyway. [F](#)

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COMEDY

Cristela Alonzo: My Affordable Care Act

The stand-up comedian and first Latina to create, write, and star in a network television sitcom (*Cristela*) brings her comedy to the Vic. *Sat 11/23, 8 PM, the Vic, 3145 N. Sheffield, victheatre.com, \$29-\$59.*

Kyle Kinane: Spring Break

It's a homecoming for Kyle Kinane (*Drunk History*, *The Standups*, *Love*) as the comedian returns to the city where he cut his teeth to tell plenty of drinking stories. *Mon 11/25-Tue 11/26, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, thaliahallchicago.com, \$27-\$40.*

Matt Damon Improv

Matt Damon Improv comprises women of color who perform their weekly sets with a guest white person, called a "Matt Damon" if male and a "Lena Dunham" if female, who can only repeat what the regular cast members have already said in every improv scene. *Open run: Sundays 9:30 PM, Annoyance Theatre, 851 W. Belmont, theannoyance.com, \$8.*

DANCE

Bangarra Dance Theatre

Led by artistic director Stephen Page, Bangarra is an Australian dance and performance troupe composed entirely of artists from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. See preview for more. *Fri-Sat 11/22-11/23, 7:30 PM, Harris Theater, 205 E. Randolph, harristheaterchicago.org, \$35-\$140.*

Evanston Dance Ensemble Young Choreographers Project

Performers with the Evanston Dance Ensemble unveil new pieces they've created, including a full-company piece by Randy Duncan, a three-time recipient of the Ruth Page Award for choreography. *Sat 11/23-Sun 11/24, 4 and 7 PM, Studio5, 1934 Dempster St., Evanston, studio5.dance, \$18, \$12 students and seniors.*

Everyday People Everyday Action

Clinard Dance and Japanese photographer Akito Tsuda collaborate on this interdisciplinary work combining Clinard's flamenco dance and music and Tsuda's photos of Pilsen in the early 1990s. The event is part of Clinard's 20th anniversary celebration. *Sun 11/24, 2 PM, National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 W. 19th, nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org, \$25, \$15 students and seniors.*

LIT

An Evening With David Sedaris

The best-selling author and humorist reads all-new stories from his latest collection of essays, *Calypso*. The night also includes an audience Q&A and a book signing. *Thu 11/21, 7:30 PM, Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Ida B. Wells, auditoriumtheatre.org, \$44-\$64.*

Poetry Off the Shelf: Cave Canem Legacy Conversation

ChiYuma Elliott, Gregory Pardlo, and Marilyn Nelson participate in a reading and discussion of works concerning the theme "writing our family's histories." *Thu*



Bryan Northup, *Sea Inside, 2017* COURTESY THE ARTIST

11/21, 7 PM, the Poetry Foundation, 61 W. Superior, poetryfoundation.org. FREE

You're Being Ridiculous

The live-lit show celebrates its nine-year anniversary with readings from Lily Be, Betsy Haberl, Robin Kacy, Matthew Lippman, Lupe Nunez, Jeremy Owens, Julie Starbird, and LeeAnn Yops. *Fri 11/22, 6:30 PM, the Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, yourebeingridiculous.com, \$15.*

THEATER

Always . . . Patsy Cline

Ted Swindley's musical portrait of the friendship between country crooner Patsy Cline and fan Louise Seger, who took Cline into her home after a show one night and struck up a correspondence that lasted until Cline's premature death, gets a production with Firebrand Theatre under Brigitte Ditmars's direction. *Through 12/15: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Tue 11/19, 7:30 PM; no performance Thu 11/28, Den Theatre, firebrandtheatre.org, \$40 general, \$50 cabaret, \$20 students, industry, and rush.*

The First Deep Breath

A pastor and his family prepare for a church service to honor the daughter who died six years earlier. But the return from prison of the son blamed for her death unleashes secrets and skeletons. Lee Edward Colston II's play, developed through the 2018 Ignition Festival of New Plays at Victory Gardens, is directed in its world premiere by Steve H. Broadnax III. *Through 12/22: Tue-Fri 7 PM, Sat 2 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Wed 12/4, 2 PM; no show Thu 11/28, Victory Gardens Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln, victorygardens.org, \$31-\$65.*

The Simon & Garfunkel Story

This immersive concert show incorporates art video projections, photos, and original video footage along with a live band to trace the story of the famous folk-rock duo, from their earliest days to their reunion concert in Central Park in 1981. *Through 12/8: Tue-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 6 PM; also 2 PM Fri 11/29; no performance Thu 11/28, Broadway Playhouse, 835 N. Michigan, broadwayinchicago.com, \$35-\$100.*

Writer's Series

AstonRep Theatre Company presents its 11th annual afternoon of staged readings by local writers. This year's offerings include Jasmine Sharma's *Leaving Wonderland*, which reconfigures Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* through the lens of a sexual assault survivor, and Ellen Wiese's *Two-Legged Ghost*, which finds three

generations of women in one family trapped by a snowstorm in their ancestral Massachusetts home. *Sat 11/23, 2 PM, the Edge Theater, 5451 N. Broadway, astonrep.com, donations accepted.*

VISUAL ARTS

"Finding Japan's 'Lost Decade': Tetsuya Ishida and the Ambivalence of Economic Decline"

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A lecture on artist Tetsuya Ishida's work by Hendrix College president and history professor William M. Tsutsui. *Fri 11/22, 6:30 PM, Wrightwood 659, 659 W. Wrightwood, wrightwood659.org.*

"My America: Immigrant and Refugee Writers Today"

Visitors will be brought face-to-face with authors who are immigrants and refugees at this interactive video and in-person exhibition. *Through May 2021, 10 AM-5 PM daily, American Writers Museum, 180 N. Michigan, americanwritersmuseum.org, \$12, \$8 for students and seniors, children 12 and under free.*

Navi Arts Winter Fest

Navi Arts Fest showcases local artists and craft makers. *Sat 11/23, 10 AM-3 PM, National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture, 3015 W. Division, nmprac.org. FREE*

"Sea Inside: Visioning Single-Use Plastic at the Cellular Level"

Large works made out of single-use plastic bags by artist Bryan Northup. *Opening reception Fri 11/22, 5:30-7:30 PM. Through 2/16, Mon-Fri 9:30 AM-5 PM, Sat-Sun 10 AM-5 PM, International Museum of Surgical Science, 1524 N. Lake Shore Dr., imss.org, \$17, \$13 for seniors, students, and members of the military, \$9 children, members free. FI*

COMEDY

Turning life lessons into a Korporate Bidness

Donovan Price turns to YouTube to hilariously highlight what #BlackChicagoBeLike.

By TYRA NICOLE TRICHE

When you were in high school, did you ever sneak into a girl's house after school? And did her dad happen to come home, after being fired from work, in the midst of the action? So you hid in the bathroom, only for him to come in there and poop while you're hiding behind the shower curtain? Well, Korporate has.

"Aw, you wanted to know how I got up out the jam?" he asks. "I channelled my inner Spidy senses, fuck you talm 'bout." This is a scene from #BlackChicagoBeLikePart49, and at this point Korporate has somehow wedged himself between the shower walls and pressed himself against the ceiling. But he makes it out alive. And the moral of the story? "If her pops ain't part of the union at his job, don't fuck with her."

You might recognize Donovan Price, better known as Korporate, from your Facebook time line or YouTube feed. He considers himself an all-around entertainer, much like Childish Gambino, but began his career as a rapper. While starting to post his music to social media, he noticed that established artists he followed often posted funny content from across the Internet in between posts about their careers.

"It pretty much came to me, What if that content that I was dropping in between dropping music was me?" he says. The idea

prompted him to start uploading short skits to Facebook in April 2015. It wasn't until January 2016 that he released the first #ChicagoNig-gazBeLike video and began posting on his YouTube channel, Korporate Bidness. He later made the decision to change the title of his videos to #BlackChicagoBeLike. The name, he says, is not a reference to race. Rather, he has the Black market in mind.

"#BlackChicagoBeLike is meant to show life in Chicago on the other side of Michigan Avenue," he says. The goal of his YouTube videos is to accurately portray life on the city's south and west sides, areas that are often disregarded or inaccurately depicted in the media. He believes uplifting Chicago is "one of the most important jobs" that he has, so he's made it a point to partner with fellow Chicago creatives and consistently promote local businesses in his videos.



Korporate Bidness COURTESY THE ARTIST

happened to you, boa?" After hearing about the incident, he proceeds to force Donovan to go back outside and defend himself, saying to him, "If you don't beat his ass, Imma beat yo ass." The lingo and mannerisms of each of the characters is so quintessentially Chicago it's hard not to laugh if you're from here. It's been two years since that video was posted, and the momentum it created has yet to be interrupted.

"I don't know why it's so hard for different people to capture Chicago correctly," Price says. "I.e., that *Chiraq* movie. No shade to *The Chi*, but they don't capture it well either. Not to take away from it being a good show with good story lines and shit, but if you gon' call it *The Chi*, it's got to be Chicago. And it just ain't that."

Seeing shows and movies present such a flawed portrayal of the people, places, and things that make Chicago what it is inspired #BlackChicagoBeLikeTheSeries, which Price started in February. The first season follows Donovan as he seeks revenge after a family member gets shot. These episodes are longer than his #BlackChicagoBeLikeVideos, typically about seven minutes each.

Price says that he's always had a passion for storytelling and teaching, and each of his #BlackChicagoBeLike videos as well as #BlackChicagoBeLikeTheSeries season one concludes with a life lesson. Some of the lessons are lighthearted—at the end of the video recounting his first fight, he says, "Moral of the story, bro, and I learned this at an early age: Mu'fuckas that do the most usually ain't on shit. On God." Other videos have more profound takeaways, like the lesson that runs throughout #BlackChicagoBeLikeTheSeries' first season about gun violence and handling the aftermath, contemplating whether retaliating against the initial shooter is really worth it.

Since Price started his YouTube channel it's amassed more than a million subscribers, and he's quickly gaining recognition in the city. During our time chatting at the Starbucks on the corner of 71st and Stony Island, it felt as if everyone knew him—several people stopped him to shake his hand and congratulate him on his success. It's proof that the authenticity of his videos has captured the hearts of his viewers and allowed him to truly impact his audience.

He mentioned a comment he'd received on

His #BlackChicagoBeLike videos are typically short, between two to four minutes long, and they act much like diary entries as he narrates the tales like memories. He writes the scripts, records the videos, and edits them himself.

"I remember what video I posted to YouTube that triggered the algorithm and allowed me to have a consistent flow of subscribers and views," he says. "I had a young man playing me as a child, and I told a story about when I had my first fight."

That was #BlackChicagoBeLikePart44, which now rests at 7.2 million views. The video is a two-minute-long skit in which a young Donovan gets hit in the eye by another kid, Pooh Man, while walking home after school eating Frooties that he refuses to let Pooh Man have. When Donovan gets home, clearly injured, his older brother asks, "What the fuck

ARTS & CULTURE

Instagram not too long ago. The person told him that “they was basically gon’ get down on somebody, cause some type of bodily harm. It was a message in one of my videos that really made them reevaluate what they were going to do,” he says. That made him reflect on the loss of his good friend Zack TV, a local journalist who fell victim to gun violence last year, and the importance of influence.

“Allegedly, when he was gunned down, it was three or four people present,” Price says. “When you think about it, if one of those people had stepped up and took the responsibility of influencing the people they were with like, ‘Nah, we tweaking, bro, we gone,’ he’d still be here today. They could have saved that man’s life. I realize that with these productions, I possibly save lives every day, and that means a lot to me.”

Price’s series has gained the attention of many large businesses and corporations, some of which have reached out to sponsor videos. He’s learned, though, that working with these large entities can be difficult territory to navigate as a Black creative. A couple months ago, he had to remove #BlackChicagoBeLikePart72 from YouTube because of a complaint by the video’s sponsor, the Cook County Health and Hospitals System. He’d initially been contracted to do the video by the Cook County Department of Public Health. “They said that my demographic is the demographic that they need to reach to really bring awareness to taking care of yourself and not putting others at risk with sexually transmitted diseases,” Price says. “That video garnered one million views in probably like 30 hours.”

In the video, his character meets a young woman outside of a club, and she gives him a blow job in a car. A week later, he notices that it burns when he pees and his stomach is cramping. His grandma tells him he needs to go to the doctor, but he doesn’t think much of it because he and the young lady didn’t have penetrative sex. He decides to visit the Cook County Department of Public Health, where he tells the doctor his symptoms and says that he thinks “somebody got down on me . . . sexually.” He receives treatment for gonorrhea, and ends the video with: “Moral of the story: Strap up. Don’t guess, get checked. On God.”

Price says that in the video he depicted an organic situation that effectively relayed the message of being on top of your sexual health, and that the people who initially contracted him to make the video were very pleased with the final product. The problem came when the

Cook County Department of Public Health’s administrative body got involved.

“Their administrative body, Cook County hospital system, they didn’t understand it. They didn’t understand the content,” he says. “People tend to fear what they don’t understand.”

Cook County Health and Hospitals demanded that he take the video down—at 1.7 million views. It was a difficult thing for him to do, since this was a major milestone in his career.

“I really felt a way about that. My feelings were really hurt about that video,” he says. “That had one of the strongest messages that I’ve ever delivered in a video, ‘cause that’s real.” Cook County Health and Hospitals didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment.

While that experience and a few other instances of the sort have made Price reconsider the way that he handles business and what companies he’ll work with, his trials have only motivated him to go even harder with his projects. Earlier this month he released a video collaboration with AT&T for its #Code-sofCulture campaign. The video begins with him reading his T-shirt, which says, “It’s not Chiraq, it’s Chicago . . . GOOFY!” He had the same T-shirt on when we met up, and he wears shirts with the same message in many of his videos.

“Bro, you the GOAT, stay with the positive. The world needs it,” reads one person’s comment under that post. Someone else’s says, “Need that shirt bro!!! This is so necessary. Words have power and we can’t keep speaking Chiraq. It’s CHICAGO!!”

Price has also been working on his debut rap album. He’s already dropped three singles, and the latest, “Real Tears,” features his daughter, Brazile Marie, who stars in many of his videos as well. In the song, Price raps about Chicago’s unsolved murders, specifically those of Black women who’ve been killed and gone missing in the city. At the end of the song Brazile sings, “Don’t shoot / I want to grow up.” There’s no doubt that he’ll continue to drop knowledge in the work that he creates, and there’s no telling what the next season of #BlackChicagoBe-LikeTheSeries will bring.

“Season two is definitely on the way. I’m working on trying to bring it to a bigger platform with higher production,” he says. “But if it don’t work out, as long as I got YouTube and the latest iPhone, I’m Gucci.” 

 @vivatyra

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FESTIVAL

Fur the record

Furries aren't all fetishists—they're members of a supportive community who (sometimes) don costumes to feel more comfortable in their own skins.

By **TONY PEREGRIN**

“It’s not like we’re saying sex doesn’t happen—when you get adults in a hotel somewhere, stuff’s going to happen,” says Matt Berger, media relations lead for Midwest FurFest. “But sex is definitely not something that’s predominant, especially in public spaces.” He’s shrugging off a persistent misconception that all furries are sexual fetishists who enjoy cavorting about in animal costumes.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Midwest Furry Fandom, Inc., a regional organization that supports Midwest FurFest—one of the largest conventions in the U.S. celebrating the fandom of anthropomorphic animals. This year, the fur and games take place from December 5 to 8 at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center. Midwest FurFest is open to all ages, though children under 17 may only attend with a parent or “designated adult” (children under six must also be accompanied by a guardian but are not permitted to partake in any of the fest’s programming or events).

If furries—who often dress in custom fur suits (a mascot-style costume of an original character)—are not about a romp in the hay, what sets these individuals apart from the cosplay world?

“Science fiction conventions have fairly well-drawn boundaries around what’s there, what you’re doing, and why you’re there, with a fan base built largely around predefined roles,” Berger says. “The definition of a furry varies by individual—a furry could be anyone who has an interest in things like anthropomorphic-related animation, artwork, and performing.”



Group photo from Midwest FurFest 2015
 JIM YOUNG/COURTESY MIDWEST FURFEST

While a vast majority of individuals consume anthropomorphic-related content at some point in their lives (think: Mickey Mouse, *Zootopia*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*’s Rocket Raccoon), furries exhibit a focused, lifelong interest in this world.

For Berger, figuring out he was a furry was a gradual process. “I was definitely a Disney kid . . . but I also got into it through performing,” he says. “I was a volunteer in Canada for the Make-a-Wish Foundation, performing as a mascot at various events to help raise funds. Donning a fur suit is a pretty cool experience because it’s something that immediately puts a smile on someone’s face as they’re looking at you.”

Berger’s alter-ego persona—sometimes known as a “fursona” in the furry community—is “Kodi,” a gray-and-white husky canine character he created nearly 15 years ago. “Fur suiters” claim the costumes are transformative, allowing the individual to amplify pieces of their personality that are typically more dormant in everyday life. Berger says he’s more “happy and bouncy” as Kodi; others become mischievous, silly, flirty, mysterious, or even sinister. Fur suiters typically do not speak while in costume and rely on pantomime to communicate, which Berger says helps individuals shape-shift into character and exhibit key traits of their fursona.

Participants may have more than one fur-

sona (rare but possible), or they may decide to forgo a fursona entirely. In fact, 30 to 40 percent of Midwest FurFest attendees do not wear a fur suit, according to Berger.

For those who do suit up, however, the Midwest FurFest Fursuit Dance Competition is the weekend’s premier event. “Going back nine years or so, the idea of dancing in a fur suit or costume was viewed as kind of silly because of how difficult it would be to manipulate the suit,” Berger says. “And then it slowly became more and more interesting, and now, I’d argue, it is probably one of the bigger things in the fandom for a lot of people.”

According to the updated rules for the 2019 dance competition, both full and partial suits are allowed for competitors, but “costumes should be arranged so that no skin is exposed or visible at any point during the performer’s showcase.” In addition, all costumes are required to be “free of profanity or inappropriate accessories.”

“The dance competition is about showmanship: Can you get the crowd interested? How complex are your dance moves?” Berger says. “The judges look at things like how well your moves relate [to the audience] and impart emotions. It’s definitely an amazing thing to watch someone do a full body flip wearing a giant animal costume.”

In addition to the dance competition, Midwest FurFest offers more than 150 education-

and entertainment-based sessions, including video and tabletop gaming, a voice-actor workshop, kink discussion group (18+ only), various writing workshops, a pie-throwing seminar, basics of ballroom dancing, travel tips, and sessions on fur suit safety and maintenance. New this year is the Quiet Room, a space where attendees can spend time away from noise, lights, photographers, and other convention-related stimuli.

Since 2000, Midwest FurFest has grown from 388 attendees to more than 10,000, with upwards of \$540,000 raised for wildlife- and animal-related charities, including this year’s beneficiary, the local no-kill shelter Felines & Canines.

As the culture of the furries continues to rise in popularity, members of this community are starting to feel less marginalized.

“The fact that you can just say ‘the furry’ and you don’t have to explain to people what that means to the same degree that you used to means we’re becoming a lot more mainstream,” Berger says. “As it gets bigger and more accessible to folks, you’ll see more and more of these conventions. We joke there’s a furry convention somewhere in the country almost every weekend now.”

LIT

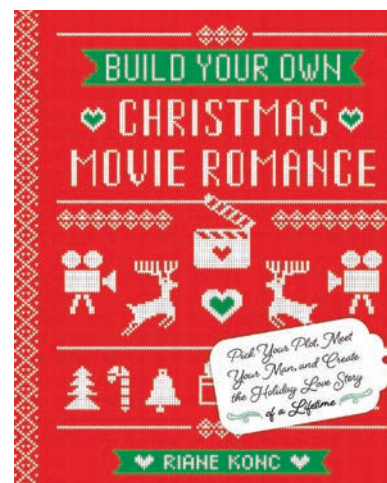
Riane Konc wants to help you *Build Your Own Christmas Movie Romance*

The choose-your-own-adventure parody features all the best tropes and treats of made-for-TV holiday specials.

By MATTHEW SIGUR



Riane Konc MICHAEL MATZKO PHOTOGRAPHY



‘T’is the season for cheesy, made-for-TV holiday movies. These fluffy flicks appear on the Hallmark Channel, Lifetime, and now even Netflix. Each one is loaded with snuggles, slapstick, and secrets that threaten the entire town. And at the heart of every story is a woman who will save everything.

That formula drives Riane Konc’s book *Build Your Own Christmas Movie Romance* (Ulysses Press). The Cincinnati-based humorist and Second City instructor’s debut follows a businesswoman named Chrissy. In the book, readers decide the fate of Chrissy’s hectic holidays—whether she’ll answer phone calls from her candy-cane-farming mother, return home to Candy Cane Falls, or ditch the fam to ski with a terrible ex-boyfriend—and craft their own cheesy Christmas movie.

Before this year, Konc had only passively watched such fare. But when she saw a job posting from California-based Ulysses Press

searching for holiday-themed parodies, she sent her best pitch and got the job. Quickly, she started doing research, watching movies like *The Christmas Card*, *A Christmas Detour*, and *It’s Christmas, Carol!* It was easier said than done in the middle of springtime.

“At that time, these movies weren’t largely available to stream, so I would check out a stack of ten made-for-TV Christmas movies on DVD from the library in March, April, and May,” Konc says. “I was always avoiding eye contact with librarians. I felt like I needed to tell them that everything was fine, that I was OK.”

Further stress came from a frightening patch of writer’s block that Konc couldn’t shake. But with each day of watching, studying, then writing, she slowly developed a rhythm that lifted the block. Still, she felt the material might be too weird.

“I would hit my word count and sit at my desk for a minute and think, ‘What has happened here today?’ It was a surprise every time,” she says.

Some of the weirder moments included Chrissy and her mother discussing strains of peppermint as if they were talking about weed, conversations presented without context in the middle of scenes, and the invention of a “Grinch snake”—the only venomous snake active in the midwest during Christmas break.

“I thought there was no way they would publish this book,” Konc says.

From someone who once had no opinions

on the subject, Konc has become a Hallmark holiday movie aficionado. She has the most respect for those movies with puns in the titles, like *Snowmance* and *Fir Crazy*. She can easily rattle off subgenres and plot details like secret royalty, cookie-baking contests, and ruthless condo board associations. While writing, she wanted to cram in every piece of holiday ridiculousness she came up with.

“I could have written a book that was twice as long, because I wanted to have every micro-plot,” she says. “I wanted to cram in as many of those story lines and twists as possible, but I knew that would be tiresome. The story of ‘the big business lady who hates Christmas but has to learn a lesson’ became the plot, and having that structure helped. Then each choice gave texture and allowed me to incorporate those smaller elements of the other Christmas movies.”

The key was balance. Konc wanted to write something that could be enjoyed by everyone from a holiday-loving grandma to a Christmas cynic.

“There are happy endings galore, and cuddly moments of Christmas cheer for anyone who is looking. If you want to read someone ruthlessly satirizing a genre, that’s also there,” she says. “If you love Hallmark movies, you can read this without feeling bad about yourself. They’re being made fun of by someone who has watched as many as you.”

@MatthewSigur

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Chicago Tribune

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Pictured: Ayanna Bria Bakari and Mary Beth Fisher. Photo by Michael Broslow.

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DANCE PREVIEW

Bangarra Dance Theatre rekindles Aboriginal heritage

The Australian company makes its Chicago debut.

By **IRENE HSIAO**

Bangarra Dance Theatre of Australia makes its Chicago debut this week at the Harris Theater. Founded in 1989 by American choreographer Carole Johnson and directed since 1991 by Stephen Page, an Australian dancer and choreographer of Nunukul and Munaldjali descent, Bangarra has been lauded for its celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage through a fusion of contemporary dance and Australian First Nations culture.

“Australia was colonized by the British Commonwealth in 1788,” explains Page. “Millions of First Nations people died. Millions survived. The First Nations of Australia are scientifically considered the oldest nations in the world. And dance is a huge part of our kinship system in aboriginal First Nations culture.” The company was sparked by the curriculum at National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association Dance College in Sydney, where students, in addition to training in American and European modern and contemporary dance, are tutored in Aboriginal dance, music, and other traditions from the northern regions of Australia, which did not suffer the overwhelming genocide of the southern regions. “The combination of all these practices became the distinctive language of Bangarra,” says Page. “First Nations

would share with themselves, empower, connect, and rekindle across cultures. We employ 18 full-time dancers who are all First Nations, and the majority come from the southern end, where they have been disconnected from their culture. When they come to Bangarra, they get to reconnect.”

Bangarra will present two works at the Harris choreographed by Page, *Spirit* (2004) and *Nyapanyapa* (2016). The latter piece is inspired by the bark paintings of Arnhem Land artist Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, whom Page encountered on multiple occasions when Bangarra toured through Yirrkala, an Indigenous community in Australia’s Northern Territory. The dancers respond to five paintings, including one that represents a water buffalo attack that traumatized Yunupingu decades ago as she was hunting for turtle eggs in a bush apple forest. “Painting for her is a meditative process—a place of reflection, embedded in her life and history. It reminds me of why I started dancing as a young man . . . because it took me to a safe and spiritual place,” Page has said.

Bangarra isn’t “a university, tertiary, academic lecture performance where people have to understand,” says Page. “People just come along—they surrender, they become a three-year-old child and see this distinctive language of old and new that’s celebrated from our landscape. Their spiritual consciousness is awakened because they know it comes from ritual and tradition that is connected to the land and to First Nations clans. We’re the only First Nations company in the world doing what we’re doing. We want to inspire our global First Nations sisters and brothers. Our work is about our thriving resilience of surviving the 270 years of colonization. You spend your whole life decolonizing all that trauma.”

@IreneCHsiao

THEATER



Waiting for Godot
 CHARLES OSGOOD

REVIEW

Returning to Godot

Dennis Začek stages Samuel Beckett’s classic again—48 years after his first time.

By **ALBERT WILLIAMS**

Written in the wake of World War II, with its carnage and cruelty committed by all sides on a scale previously unimaginable, Irish writer Samuel Beckett’s 1949 *Waiting for Godot* is timeless and of the moment—a bleakly comic portrait of human beings coping with the basic, harsh realities of existence while vainly looking for something “to give us the impression we exist.” Confounding audiences and scholars who have debated for decades what Godot means (or, for that matter, who “Godot” is), this “tragicomedy in two acts” is theatrical poetry that embodies Archibald MacLeish’s dictum (stated in his 1926 “Ars Poetica”): “A poem should not mean / But be.”

Two men, Vladimir and Estragon—Didi and Gogo—pass the time together outdoors, on a patch of land that is bare except for a leafless tree. Dressed in baggy, beat-up suits and ill-fitting bowler hats, they appear to be homeless tramps, or maybe errant music-hall comedians. They are “waiting for Godot . . . or for night to fall,” as Didi explains to the increasingly restless and impatient Gogo. While they wait, they talk—sometimes bantering, sometimes bickering. Occasionally they consider committing suicide by hanging themselves from the tree; but they have no rope, and their belts won’t do. Gogo struggles to pull off his boots, complaining they hurt his feet; Didi fusses with

his bowler hat. Then along comes Pozzo—a man of wealth and importance, judging by his imperious attitude, fine attire, educated speech, and the fact that he is led by a silent slave, Lucky, whom he controls with a leashlike rope tied around Lucky’s neck. A couple of times a young boy appears to tell Didi and Gogo that Mr. Godot is not coming today—but surely will tomorrow. So they wait, bantering and bickering. And we watch them wait. *Waiting for Godot* does not mean anything; it is.

Dennis Začek, longtime artistic director of Chicago’s Victory Gardens Theater, returns to the venue he once led as the producer and director of this solid staging of Beckett’s seminal script. His cast is headed by former Chicago actor Michael Saad (well remembered from Začek’s 1975 Victory Gardens rendition of Pinter’s *The Caretaker* as well as the Organic Theater’s 1970s productions

VR WAITING FOR GODOT
Through 12/15: Wed-Sat
8 PM, Sun 4 PM; also Sat 11/30,
4 PM; no performance Thu
11/28, Victory Gardens Theater,
2433 N. Lincoln, 773-871-3000,
victorygardens.org, \$40.

of *Bleacher Bums*, *The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit*, and *Bloody Bess*), who reprises the role of Gogo that he played under Začek’s direction as a student at Loyola University in 1971. Saad’s broadly smiling, restless, irritable, and impetuous Gogo is a perfect complement to Larry Neumann Jr.’s Didi—scholarly, prim, dourly disapproving, yet prone to sudden bursts of odd pleasure (sometimes at the expense of a less fortunate person). Steve Pickering and Nima Rakhshanifar are Pozzo and Lucky, the ruler and ruled, equally miserable in their symbiotic bondage.



The Niceties 📍 MICHAEL BROSILOW

REVIEW

Culture clash

An academic debate becomes a racially charged conflagration in *The Niceties*.

By CATEY SULLIVAN

In 2015, Yale University was rocked by student activists demanding change within an organization founded on white supremacy and still mired in systemic racism. (Don't even try. The school was founded in 1701 by Connecticut colonists to educate puritanical clergy—in other words, white men only. It was named for a wealthy member of the East India Company, which made fortunes on the backs of slave labor throughout the world. According to Yale's most recent figures, Black and African American students make up less than 8 percent of the student population.)

The flashpoint for the unrest at Yale was Erika Christakis, a professor who defended the right of students to wear “offensive” costumes after a memo went out urging Yalies to avoid cultural appropriation or otherwise potentially problematic choices in their Halloween attire.

Eleanor Burgess's one-set two-hander at Writers Theatre looks a lot like Yale. Set at

an unnamed elite Connecticut college, *The Niceties* is a blistering battle between Janine (Mary Beth Fisher), a Christakis-reminiscent professor, and Zoe (Ayanna Bria Bakari), a formidably intelligent undergrad. When

RR THE NICETIES
Through 12/8: Tue-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 and 6 PM; also Wed 11/27 and 12/4, 3 PM; no performance Thu 11/28 or Sun 12/8, 6 PM, Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Ct., Glencoe, 847-242-6000, writerstheatre.org, \$50-\$80.

Zoe comes to Janine for feedback on a thesis paper, things escalate from errant commas to scorched earth with the speed of a flames licking through an archive of 17th-century primary documents soaked in petrol. Or rather, the speed of a viral video.

Janine faults Zoe's thesis for its lack of primary source citations. But those sources are difficult—if not impossible—to find. Zoe's paper deals in large part with African Americans and their role in the American Revolution. That population wasn't in a position to generate the voluminous paper trail left by Washington and Jefferson. And even if she could find primary sources, Zoe adds, she doesn't have time to rewrite. She's booked solid with protests, actions against Sandra Day O'Connor and Howard Stern among them.

Janine acknowledges the problem with sources. But she riddles her language with microaggressions, side-eyes Zoe's extracurriculars, and expresses a baffled contempt of millennials' “cult of fragility.” Greatness, says Janine, can't be achieved if you spend your life protected by “trigger warnings” and “safe spaces.”

In Bakari's ruthlessly intense performance, you can see how exhausted and enraged Zoe is by the barrage of the “everyday awful” of being a Black woman in a world where history renders her invisible and daily life makes something as innocuous as going for a jog a racially fraught experience. As Janine, Fisher nails the look (and sound) of a white liberal who makes the mistake of believing that her own (substantial) battles mean she understands and can minimize those of a Black woman.

With a lesser cast, *The Niceties* would be more debate than drama. The point-counterpoint structure works because director Marti Lyons gets such incendiary performances from Fisher and Bakari. Zoe gets the final blistering word with the humbled (or is she?) Janine, but Burgess makes it clear that she could wind up paying dearly for her own act of revolution. **R**

🐦 @CateySullivan

court THEATRE

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Photo: Kelvin Roston, Jr. (Mazza).

THEATER

OPENING

The song of Nondumiso Tembe

Lindiwe has a great star, but the story overwhelms the music.

Steppenwolf's long association with Ladysmith Black Mambazo, the legendary South African male a cappella choral group, stretches back nearly 30 years, since Tug Yourgrau's apartheid-era drama *The Song of Jacob Zulu* went from the company's stage to Broadway under Eric Simonson's direction. Simonson subsequently collaborated with the company on *Nomathemba*, and now he's written and codirected (with Jonathan Berry) *Lindiwe*. The title character, played by the effervescent and vocally magnetic Nondumiso Tembe, falls for Adam (Erik Hellman), a young blues drummer in Chicago, while touring with Mambazo and finds herself in a few different kinds of hell—from an ICE detention center to an afterworld run by Yasen Peyankov's "Keeper," who wants to keep her from singing and is willing to use her love for Adam as a bargaining chip to make that happen.

Narratively, it's a messy affair, and one that doesn't really get to the heart of either the blues or Mambazo's traditions, or even why the music means so much to these lovers. The nine members of the group perform as choral figures for the story, which mashes up the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice with everything from *A Star Is Born* (Adam, who's come to South Africa to be with Lindiwe, resents her rising profile) to *The Good Place*. (Peyankov's goth-glam Keeper maintains, a la Marc Evan Jackson's head demon Shawn in the latter, that humans don't really evolve.)

The music is glorious, especially when Tembe is singing. But what could be a heartfelt meditation on the connections that love, music, and love of music build between people and across time bogs down with too much self-conscious story and not enough song. —**KERRY REID** *LINDIWE* Through 1/5: Tue 7:30 PM, Wed 2 and 7:30 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Sun 11/24 and 12/1, 7:30 PM; no show 2 PM Wed 11/27; no shows Thu 11/28 and 12/19, Tue 12/24, or Wed 12/25 and 1/1, Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted, 312-335-1650, steppenwolf.org, \$54-\$114.

Cracked hearts

The Nutcracker returns to the House with a few twists.

It took me nine years to get out to the House Theatre's annual nonballetic staging of *The Nutcracker*, but after finally seeing it last year, I was eager to make a return trip. Created by Jake Minton, Phillip Klapperich, Kevin O'Donnell, and Tommy Rapley, the House version imagines a family broken apart by grief and finding their way

back to a different kind of normal.

The twist this year is that the family is headed by two dads—Benjamin Sprunger's Marty and Nicholas Bailey's David. Inevitably, the casting choice invites us to meditate on how difficult it can be for LGBTQ people to create families in the first place and in too many places. (It also allows for sly jokes about Fire Island.) The loss of their eldest, Fritz (Dwayne Everett), who dies in combat on Christmas Eve, sends their daughter, Clara (Amaris Sanchez), on a Wizard of Oz-like quest a year later to save Christmas for herself and her dads. She's accompanied by her newly come-to-life toys, including a nutcracker in Fritz's image, gifted by her mysterious Aunt Drosselmeyer (Amanda De La Guardia, in fine hoydenish form).

A suitably creepy rat-king puppet from Chicago Puppet Studio, delicious comic turns from Colin Morgan, Johnny Arena, and Rachel Shapiro as Clara's trio of toy friends, and the earnest tunes combine for a sad-sweet, hopeful-heartfelt peek into how to keep the holidays alive—even (or especially) when the people who shared them with you are gone from this corporeal realm. That's a story worth sharing for all families. —**KERRY REID** *THE NUTCRACKER* Through 12/29: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Fri 11/29, 3 PM; Sun 12/8, 12/15, and 12/22, 7 PM; and Mon 12/23, 7 PM; no performance Thu 11/28, Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division, 773-769-3832, thehousetheatre.com, \$30-\$50, \$20 student and industry same-day tickets based on availability.

Nowhere to hide

Court Theatre's Oedipus Rex blinds us with pain and decimation.

Montaigne, quoting from ancient sources, describes a painting of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. In it, the victim's father is shown with a veil hanging over his face, as if to say, Montaigne suggests, that no expression could convey what Agamemnon is feeling as he watches his innocent girl go to slaughter. Even though that seems like such a dodge to us now, every play that confronts the limits of human suffering, as Court Theatre's *Oedipus* does, needs to find its version of Agamemnon's veil. These poor actors cannot be expected to have a face they can make that communicates, with the appropriate gravity, "Oh God, my husband is my son."

This production, directed by Charles Newell and translated from Sophocles by the late former Court artistic director Nicholas Rudall, doesn't believe in veils, and neither do its performers. The entire cast is onstage almost the whole time, gyrating in tandem across John Culbert's stark white set under dazzling and sometimes blinding light design by Keith Parham. The play conceals nothing, wants all of its pain and decimation to happen publicly. Kelvin Roston Jr., who plays Oedipus, seems especially bent on making his audience a party to the



Oliver! LIZ LAUREN

character's ordeal. But what is Jocasta (Kate Collins), writhing under hot direct light, supposed to do with her face, her voice, or her limbs, to get across what the words say she is experiencing? There is no such gesture.

This show inaugurates Court's Oedipus Trilogy, with *The Gospel at Colonus* (May 2020) and *Antigone* (2020/2021) to follow. —**MAX MALLER** *OEDIPUS REX* Through 12/8: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2 and 7:30 PM; no performance Thu 11/28, Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis, 773-753-4472, courttheatre.org, \$37.50-\$84.

Consider yourself at home

Marriott's Oliver! overcomes its age with an energetic ensemble.

Lionel Bart's musical adaptation of Charles Dickens's 1839 novel *Oliver Twist* first premiered on London's West End in 1960, went on to a Tony Award-winning run on Broadway in 1963, and in 1968 was made into a hit movie that won six Academy Awards, including Oscars for best director and best picture. But that was a long time ago. And it shows. In Bart's tunes (full of nostalgic looks back to England's now long-dead music hall tradition), in the melodramatic story (hinging on several unbelievable convenient coincidences), and in cringeworthy running gags about nagging wives and poor, beaten-down husbands.

Still, the show remains as energetic and entertaining as you'd expect from a musical with an exclamation mark in its title. Bart's book trims down and speeds up Dickens's leisurely newspaper-serial plot. And Bart's score is packed with earworms. Just try to get "Oom-Pah-Pah" out of your head once you've heard it.

The Marriott revival, directed by Nick Bowling with music direction by Ryan T. Nelson, is as bright and lively a re-creation of the exploitation of children in mid-19th-century London slums as you could hope for. The ensemble of triple threats is in general first-rate, and contains several brilliant standouts. William Brown's inspired take on the snake Fagin is by turns charming and dangerous, alluring and repellent. And Lucy Godinez, playing the good-hearted prostitute, Nancy,

proves again and again she's a singer to be reckoned with: her pipes are strong enough to blow the roof off the house. —**JACK HELBIG** *OLIVER!* Through 12/29: Wed 1 and 7:30 PM, Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 1 and 5 PM; also Tue 11/26, 7:30 PM; Thu 12/12 and 12/19, 1 PM; and Thu 12/26, 3 PM; 1 PM only Wed 12/11 and 12/18; no performance Thu 11/28, Marriott Theatre, 10 Marriott Dr., Lincolnshire, 847-634-0200, marriotttheatre.com, \$55-\$60.

Games people play

A woman explores her limits in Queen of Sock Pairing.

With ambitious productions that push the boundaries of subject matter, Red Tape Theatre continues to evolve, and its latest, *Queen of Sock Pairing* by Sophie Weisskoff, directed by Zach Weinberg, is one of the company's best yet. The story opens with Celia navigating relationships with her boss, Joan, mother of Walden, the boy she cares for, as well as Cai, her older boyfriend. Joan, Cai, and Walden speak for themselves, but a Narrator communicates Celia's first lines and feelings. Celia's first spoken words, "I'm sorry," reflect her disempowerment at work and with Cai.

Celia starts to see beyond her preferred "sub" role to Cai's "Dom," using play to explore their various proclivities. The show is full of profanity, BDSM, and fun-bordering-on-abusive role-playing—at one point, even composting is used as a sexual metaphor. Weisskoff succeeds at balancing the difficult moments—the gaslighting, misogyny, and emotional abuse—with moments of humor. For example, Walden (Scot West, who also plays Walden's father) is wonderfully portrayed as a sock puppet. The Narrator (Jalyn Greene) acts as a buffer, validating Celia's response and shielding her, as well as the audience, from the line of fire.

Elena Victoria Feliz is magnetic as Celia, at once vulnerable and resilient in her journey to empowerment. She's a delight to watch, emoting so much with just a look. Brenda Scott Wlazlo (Joan) oozes with self-important status while sporting a humorous Ivy League accent.

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Aaron Latterell is terrifyingly good as Cai, whose sadism violates agreed-upon boundaries. Submit to the *Queen of Sock Pairing*! —**JOSH FLANDERS** *QUEEN OF SOCK PAIRING* Through 12/14: Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 7 PM, Mon 8 PM (industry), the Ready, 4546 N. Western, redtapetheatre.org, reservations suggested. **FREE**

Succession, Edwardian style

A patriarch abuses his offspring in 1912's *Rutherford and Son*.

For a mostly forgotten 1912 play, written by Githa Sowerby (but presented under a male-sounding pen name at the time), this family drama is surprisingly similar to HBO's *Succession*—minus the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll. This business is glassworks, not a media empire, but its patriarch, Rutherford (Francis Guinan), is similarly cold, domineering, and cruel to his three children. The siblings—who often blend into the scenery because “the governor” has beat any shred of confidence or identity out of them—are also challenged to form relationships immune to their unhealthy connection with their father.

TimeLine's production, directed by Mechelle Moe, brings a very capable cast to an uneven story whose pace makes sustained engagement difficult. The slow and gloomy first act is set entirely in the dark, lifeless Rutherford drawing room. It does reveal subtle glimpses of the play's subversive social commentary, though. When Aunt Ann (Jeannie Affelder) chides Rutherford daughter Janet (Christina Gorman), “You always talk about he and him as if there's no one else in the world,” Janet responds curtly, “There isn't.” A later scene where Janet crouches on the floor removing her father's shoes, all while being called spoiled and ungrateful, is a disconcerting glimpse of how he views his daughter's place in the world.

Some redeeming moments come in the second act, when the siblings rebel against Aunt Ann's maxim that “Being happy will make no porridge.” The most moving path toward self-determination comes from

John's wife, Mary (Rochelle Therrien), who realizes that sometimes the greatest way to effect change is from the inside. —**MARISSA OBERLANDER** *RUTHERFORD AND SON* Through 1/12: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Fri 11/29, 12/27, and 1/3/20, 4 PM; no performances Thu 11/28 or Wed 12/25 and 1/1, TimeLine Theatre, 615 W. Wellington, 773-281-8463, timelinetheatre.com, \$42 Wed-Fri, \$49 Sat evening, \$57 Sat and Sun matinees, \$25 U.S. military personnel, veterans, first responders, and their spouses and family.

Move over, Charles Dickens

Jane Austen gets a holiday makeover at Northlight.

In commercializing Jane Austen's enduring appeal, playwrights Margot Melcon and Lauren Gunderson have found a surefire formula for feel-good, oft-produced holiday hits. Like 2016's *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley* checks all the right box-office boxes: clever dialogue that (sort of) gives women a voice, but without diminishing their ladylike demeanor, humor that gently addresses social justice issues without ever threatening the status quo, and—of course—the marquee value of the Austen name.

Directed by Jessica Thebus and featuring a faultless cast, Northlight's production follows Austen's beloved Bennet sisters through a *Downton Abbey*-worthy holiday crisis—by which I mean a “crisis” that everyone knows from the start will end in sugarplums (orange cookies and raisin pudding in this case). The treacle picks up two years after Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* ends, and follows the fate of Lydia Wickham, nee Bennet (Jennifer Latimore). When Lydia's adulterous husband, George (Will Mobley), crashes the Pemberley party, the festivities become a farcical series of misadventures. Overseeing all is the true heart of the household, housekeeper Mrs. Reynolds (Penny Slusher)

The cast is grand. The script creaks with contrivance

and artifice. Lydia's sister Elizabeth Darcy (Netta Walker) contacts an officer in George's distant army regiment and receives a lengthy, plot-resolving missive within roughly 48 hours. It's a horse-and-carriage-era problem, resolved at the speed of e-mail. Moreover, while George is the ostensible villain, Darcy (Luigi Sottile) is the kind of privileged jerk who insists his servants are “family” even though he treats them like servants. That's a problem never resolved here. But Melcon and Gunderson are going for sparkle, not veracity. In that, they succeed. —**CATEY SULLIVAN** *THE WICKHAMS: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY* Through 12/15: Wed 1 and 7:30 PM, Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2:30 and 8 PM, Sun 2:30 PM; also Tue 11/26, 7:30 PM, and Sun 12/1, 7 PM; no performance Thu 11/28, Northlight Theatre, North Shore Center for the Performing Arts, 9501 Skokie Blvd, Skokie, 847-673-6300, northlight.org, \$30-\$89, \$15 students (subject to availability).

Dark Durang

Eclipse closes out its all-Durang season with a brutal send-up of American paranoia.

Christopher Durang's *Why Torture Is Wrong, and the People Who Love Them* is the kind of exquisite, biting satire that below-average comedians think they have created when audiences find them offensive. Not for the faint of heart, this outstanding version of Durang's play (the last in Eclipse's all-Durang season), directed by Steve Scott, is set in a post-9/11 world caught in the grips

of paranoid xenophobia, where the characters wonder if their Middle Eastern neighbors are terrorists—or just angry about injustice like the average Brown person.

Tracey Green plays pushover Felicity, who after an evening of blackout drunken debauchery finds herself married to Zamir, played by the hilarious Siddhartha Rajan. She engages the help of her ex-military father, Leonard (Patrick Thornton), to poke around in Zamir's nebulous background. High jinks, hilarity, and a dozen content warnings ensue. Be forewarned: this play is for lovers of very dark comedy. It brutally sends up misogyny, emotional abuse, and the legacy of John Yoo.

Elaine Carlson brings the house down as Luella, a histrionic housewife who channels a more prim version of Debra Jo Rupp's Kitty Forman from *That '70s Show*. Luella uses her obsession with theater to deflect from inconvenient truths in her own household. A meta third act that absolutely should not work, and yet does, leaves us with a powerful meditation on empathy and how we judge people from other countries for expressing outdated gender-based viewpoints that we haven't overcome ourselves. Examples of top-shelf legit satire onstage are few and far between, making this production a must-see show of the season. —**SHERI FLANDERS** *WHY TORTURE IS WRONG, AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE THEM* Through 12/15: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 PM; no performance Thu 11/28, Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport, 773-935-6860, eclipsetheatre.com, \$35, \$25 students and seniors. **A**



Queen of Sock Pairing © AUSTIN D. OIE

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MARRIAGE STORY ★★★

Directed by Noah Baumbach. R, 136 min. Now playing at Music Box Theatre and Landmark's Renaissance Place Cinema; streaming on Netflix on 12/6



Marriage Story

REVIEW

Marriage Story doesn't pick sides

Noah Baumbach's latest film about divorce shows both parents not as enemies but as humans.

By **MARISSA DE LA CERDA**

As a child of separated parents, I can attest that when you're younger it's hard to see both sides of the argument. Hell, it's hard seeing any side that isn't yours—the confusion and the pain that come with this transition are stronger than anything you've felt so far. It's easy, then, to blame one parent for the fallout over the other. But as you mature, it becomes easier to view divorce with more sympathy for both parties. This seems to be the case for Noah Baumbach. In 2005, he made *The Squid and the Whale*, a film about his parent's divorce told almost exclusively from the perspective of the children. Now, 14 years later, he's made *Marriage Story*, a film about divorce from the perspectives of all sides involved.

The film begins with Nicole (Scarlett Johansson), an actress, and Charlie (Adam Driver), a playwright, describing the things they love about each other to a mediator who's helping them get through their divorce. The list is meant to remind them of why they chose each other as partners, but it also develops the two as more than just divorcees—they are each their own separate persons, with quirks and feelings that have evolved and changed as quickly as their eight-year-old son has grown.

It's soon established that there have always been some bumps in their relationship, two of the main challenges being Charlie's controlling tendencies and his work-based need to stay in New York versus Nicole's desire to be in Los Angeles. Once she books a pilot in

LA, she takes their son, Henry, with her and consults high-powered divorce attorney Nora (Laura Dern). Charlie flies out to visit. Divorce papers are served, and what was supposed to be an amicable divorce has now turned into a messy fight over who gets what furniture, who gets how much money, and, most importantly, who gets custody of Henry.

It's the small moments of sincerity in between the nastier fight scenes that truly show how complex divorce is; they also help reveal the reality of the love that survives despite the loss and death of a marriage. During a meeting with their lawyers, Nicole orders food for Charlie because she remembers what he likes. After a big fight where the two say things they shouldn't, they both sob, hug, and apologize. This complexity and this scene, specifically, allow the true range of Driver and Johansson's performances to shine.

Because of my personal experience, I almost wish Baumbach had made it easy for me to choose a side. But the film works because it makes you see the good and bad in both parents. By the end, you're rooting for both Charlie and Nicole, hoping they find their own happiness despite all the bad things and the pain they caused one another. **A**

[@marndel7](#)

NOW PLAYING

RR A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Tom Hanks continues to prove that he can do no wrong in his latest film, *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, where he portrays the beloved Fred Rogers from the children's television show *Mister Rogers Neighborhood*. We meet Mister Rogers through the eyes of cranky journalist Lloyd Vogel, who's struggling to adjust to fatherhood while grappling with the reappearance of his neglectful but well-meaning father. Vogel is played by Matthew Rhys and inspired by real-life journalist Tom Junod, who profiled Rogers in 1998 for *Esquire* magazine. The film is just as sappy as you'd expect, but it manages to carefully walk the line between sentimentality and melodrama. Director Marielle Heller tells this story in unexpected ways, including an almost meta narrative and dream sequences. Fatherhood, masculinity, forgiveness, and death are explored just as they were in the original show, which lasted decades and guided countless children into adulthood. Viewers who are expecting a peek into the intimate life of Mister Rogers may be disappointed, though; the story is more about the impact Rogers had on Vogel—whose life begins to change thanks to him—than it is about the legendary man himself. **—NOËLLE D. LILLEY** 108 min. Now playing in wide release

RR Blade Runner: The Final Cut

Not to be confused with the mislabeled "director's cut," this seventh edition of Ridley Scott's SF masterpiece (1982) is arguably the first to get it all right, finally telling the whole story comprehensibly. This visionary look at Los Angeles in 2019—a singular blend of grime and glitter that captures both the horror and the allure of Reagan-era capitalism—was a commercial flop when it first appeared. Loosely adapted from Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, it follows the hero (Harrison Ford) as he tracks down and kills "replicants," or androids. Much of the film's erotic charge and moral and ideological ambiguity stem from the fact that these characters are very nearly the only ones we care about. (We never know for sure whether Ford is a replicant himself.) With Sean Young, Rutger Hauer, Daryl Hannah, Edward James Olmos, Joe Turkel, and William J. Sanderson. **—JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** R, 117 min. Fri 11/22-Mon 11/25: 11 PM at Logan Theatre

RR Jim Allison: Breakthrough

If a whiskey-drinking Texan with a taste for outlaw country music and a 2018 Nobel Prize in medicine sounds more like a fictional character than an actual person, you haven't heard of Jim Allison—even though his cutting-edge work in immunotherapy may have played a hand in saving the life of someone you love. *Breakthrough* takes an in-depth look at this modern-day hero, whose passion for curative medicine was ignited after his mother's death from lymphoma when he was a child. The film follows Allison's journey from his college days in the heart of Austin's explosive 60s counterculture into barrooms (where he's jammed on harmonica and sat in with Willie Nelson's band) and across the

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FILM

country's leading universities and research hospitals. As it shares the history of immunotherapy, from the not-so-distant past when it was essentially considered a pseudoscience through Allison's game-changing development of the first immune checkpoint inhibitor drug, it hits upon the combination of ingenuity, drive, anties-establishment attitude, and personal sacrifice it can take to truly improve the human condition. —**JAMIE LUDWIG** PG-13, 90 min. 11/22-11/27: Fri 2 and 6:30 PM, Sat 5:15 PM, Sun 3 PM, Mon 7:45 PM, Tue 6 PM, Wed 7:45 PM at Gene Siskel Film Center

The Killing Floor

Originally broadcast on the PBS series *American Playhouse*, this creaky 1984 drama follows a young Black husband and father from the south (Damien Leake) as he migrates to Chicago during World War I to work at one of the city's south-side slaughterhouses. The relatively handsome wages (21 cents an hour!) enable him to bring his family north eventually, but after the Armistice is signed, he's fired to make room for white workers returning home from France. Written and produced by Elsa Rassbach, the movie is most interesting for its careful notation of how racial mistrust infected the union struggles of the era, though there's a dutiful feel to the whole thing and the budget restraints begin to pinch especially hard when the story arrives at the horrific race rioting that tore the city apart in the summer of 1919. Bill Duke (*A Rage in Harlem*) directed, and the cast includes such up-and-comers as Alfre Woodard, Dennis Farina, and John Mahoney. —**J.R. JONES** 118 min. Producer-writer Elsa Rassbach and lead actor Damien Leake attend the Friday-evening screening and both Saturday screenings, which are followed by a panel discussion. 11/22-11/27: Fri 3:45 and 7:45 PM, Sat 2 and 7:30 PM, Sun 4:45 PM, Mon-Tue 7:45 PM, Wed 6 PM at Gene Siskel Film Center

The Life of Juanita Castro

Made in 1965, this black-and-white Warhol feature was one of the first of his films to use sound, as well as some erratic camera movements. Scripted by Ronald Tavel, one of the stars, the film also features Marie Menken as Juanita Castro and Elektra as Raoul. On the same program, the earlier half-hour silent and black-and-white short *Blow Job* (1963), which focuses for all of its running time, and in slow motion, on the face of a young man who is presumably being serviced offscreen. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** Fri 11/22, 7 PM at the Block Museum of Art

Lover Come Back

One of the queerier Rock Hudson-Doris Day comedies, this 1961 feature has Rock as an advertising executive who keeps his clients happy with booze and broads. Doris is a prim rival who decides to go after his new account, unaware that the product doesn't really exist. A gold mine for students of 60s cultural attitudes—why is it that movies from this period look much more dated than the films of the 30s and 40s?—but not much of a picture. Delbert Mann directed; with Tony Randall, Edie Adams, Jack Oakie, Jack Kruschen, and Joe Flynn. —**DAVE KEHR** 107 min. Sat 11/23-Sun 11/24, 11:30 AM at Music Box Theatre

The Miracle of Morgan's Creek

Preston Sturges's affably blasphemous version of the Nativity, with Betty Hutton as a World War II good-time girl who finds herself in the family way after a dimly remembered night with a soldier whose name may or may not have been Ignatz Ratzkiwatzki.



Jim Allison: Breakthrough

The real miracle is that Sturges got all of this past the production-code office in 1944, particularly the arrival of Hutton's blessing, as scheduled on Christmas morning, in the form of sextuplets. Caustic and chaotic in the

arch Sturges manner, it's probably his funniest and most smilingly malicious film. With Eddie Bracken and William Demarest. —**DAVE KEHR** 99 min. Wed 11/27, 7 and 9:30 PM at Doc Films

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Life was just a party: Prince's 1999 and Chicago house music

The Purple One could hardly have avoided influencing a genre whose earliest, most ardent fans were queer Black and Brown kids.

By JACK RIEDY

The track starts with a four-on-the-floor drum pattern. A sudden keyboard hit buzzes like an electrical wire. Paired vocalists enter: “We can’t help ourselves,” they coo in harmony. “We all wanna be Prince.”

Chicago producer Felix da Housecat speaks for generations of house musicians on 2009’s “We All Wanna Be Prince,” paying homage to the artist who helped shape the genre during its birth in the early 80s. The track’s color palette is all purple—it borrows shamelessly and lovingly from the danceable electronic sounds of Prince’s 1999. Just like house music, that 1982 double album remains vital and influential today, and it’ll be reissued by Warner Brothers on November 29, remastered and packaged in three increasingly lavish editions that include as many as 35 unreleased live and studio tracks.

Prince’s first album with his band the New Power Generation, 1992’s *Love and Money*, was a commercial breakthrough for him—for the first time, he hit the top ten on the *Billboard* 200, and he sent his first two singles to the top ten on the Hot 100. Still a couple years away from the stratospheric fame of 1984’s *Purple Rain*, Prince was then an enigmatic former wunderkind, refining and expanding his sound five albums into a Warner Brothers contract. But beginning with his debut, *For You*, in 1978 and continuing through 1999 and beyond, Prince’s early albums left a mark on a generation of Chicago musicians—and they took inspiration from his sexuality and his synthesizers when they

created house music.

Prince’s early singles reached Chicago in clubs and on the radio, via WDAI (now WLS-FM, it switched to a disco format on the first day of 1979) and Herb Kent’s early-80s WXFM show *Punk Out* (which played to the South Loop juice-bar crowd with a mix of punk, new wave, and R&B). “A lot of his songs in those days were very four-on-the-floor anyway,” says DJ and producer Jesse Saunders, who’s

widely credited with creating the first house single, 1984’s “On and On.” “With Chicago being a disco kinda market, it fit in very well. You could play ‘Soft and Wet,’ ‘Sexy Dancer,’ all that kind of stuff in your set.”

Prolific producer and music entrepreneur Vince Lawrence, who wrote “On and On” with Saunders, says “I Wanna Be Your Lover” (a single from the 1979 album *Prince*) was one of the first songs he learned on piano—and he

hums a few bars of the intro into the phone as proof. Producer and DJ Steve “Silk” Hurley, who’d go on to top the UK singles chart with the J.M. Silk track “Jack Your Body” in 1987, bought the 1980 Prince album *Dirty Mind* at the recommendation of a high school friend. He had to borrow money to afford it, because at the time his budget only allowed for 45s.

Prince’s brazen, androgynous sexuality was key to his persona from the start, and it



Prince in 1982, surrounded by rare releases and ephemera from the extensive Prince collection of Chicago house producer Melvin Oliphant III, aka Traxx. © ALLEN BEAULIEU/RHINO; RYAN EDMUND FOR CHICAGO READER



Oliphant with a live Prince recording made in Vienna, Austria, in May 1987; Chicago house producer and music entrepreneur Vince Lawrence
 📷 RYAN EDMUND FOR CHICAGO
 READER: TYLER CURTIS



made him irresistible to Chicago's youth—his earliest hard-core fans were queer Black and Brown kids, but very shortly the mania was general. “Every adolescent teenager was into the oversexualized lyrics of Prince,” says Lawrence, laughing. “Do Me, Baby,” “Let’s Pretend We’re Married,” and “Head” played at all-ages clubs and house parties. When producer and songwriter Harold “Big Ed” Matthews, a house head from the early days who started making his own tracks in the 90s, first heard the term “house music,” the only meaning he knew for it was music too risqué for the radio—music you would only hear inside.

Chicago house producer Melvin Oliphant

III, aka Traxx, wants to do the same thing as a DJ that Prince did as a performer, and he’s blunt about what it is: “I want you to fuck,” he says. “That is how serious it is for me, because that is what he did, and no one really talks about that.” While touring Europe in the 90s, Oliphant amassed a large collection of Prince bootlegs and other rarities. When he met the man himself at a Paisley Park party in the early 2010s, Oliphant says, the Purple One was impressed enough by what he’d heard about the collection to pass along more music from his vault to Oliphant via a mutual friend who worked as a caretaker for Prince, looking after his stepmother and his doves. ➔

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continued from 27

Oliphant always includes Prince in his sets, specifically cuts from his archive of unreleased material. "It was Prince who taught us what 'fuck' is," he says. "'Fuck' is what we all hope to achieve in this life, when you break us down to our core. So when I say 'fuck,' I mean Prince was literally the embodiment of 'fuck.'"

Prince's easy openness about sexuality is also at the core of house music's pursuit of pleasure, manifest in classics such as Jamie Principle's "Your Love" (especially the 1987 version produced by Frankie Knuckles). In harmony with singer Adrienne Jett, Principle moans, "I need your touch / Don't make me wait for your love," sounding like he's rushing closer to climax. In 2016, *Noisey* called it "one of the sexiest songs in the annals of electronic music" and "one of the most enduring."

In case the libidinousness of his work didn't make the connection clear enough, singer and lyricist Byron Walford had chosen a pseudonym that pointed to his chief influence: a reference to one of Prince's many aliases, Jamie Starr, combined with a surname that literally had "Prince" in it. "Jamie Principle was so Prince-like in his mannerisms and demeanor that we idolized him too," Lawrence says.

With his eyeliner and high-heeled boots—and a sexuality miles from the macho sleaze of similarly glammy hair-metal stars—Prince anticipated by decades the inclusive attitude about queerness and gender variance displayed in much of today's mainstream pop. And house music, like Prince and like disco, originally caught on with queer Black and Latinx audiences, building to critical mass at legendary Chicago clubs such as the Warehouse and its successor, the Muzic Box. Word spread fast: soon even straight fans like Matthews and his friends were staying out past dawn at gay clubs, because the music was better there than anywhere else.

Chicago singer Jermaine Stewart, a friend of Lawrence's, released a Prince-influenced synth-pop single in 1983 called "The Word Is Out," whose lyrics about a clandestine relationship convinced plenty of folks that it was describing a same-sex couple. "The word is out that you and I are lovers," he sang, "that you and I been getting it on." As Lawrence recalls, "Jermaine said a lot of his strength came from *Controversy*. Prince saying 'Am I black or white, am I straight or gay?'"

Prince also shaped the sonics of house music. On 1999, he debuted a sound that would become his signature: a distinctly Prince-ified Linn LM-1 Drum Computer. It's audible from the very start of the album, its knocks and bumps cascading through the title track's iconic synth fanfare. Though the machine was



Prince and his band the Revolution during the 1999 era; Vince Lawrence's first group, Z Factor, photographed in summer 1982 in a park near his mother's home, with future house pioneer Jesse Saunders second from left and Lawrence at far right
© ALLEN BEAULIEU/
RHINO; VINCE LAWRENCE



widely used by recording artists in the early 80s, Prince manipulated its preloaded drum samples, sometimes with guitar pedals, to arrive at distinctive tones that were organically funky while clearly synthetic. Such was his ability to program grooves with the Linn that in 2016 *Spin* commented that he'd mastered it "like Miles Davis did the trumpet."

The LM-1 and its successor the LinnDrum became highly desirable to house artists in Chicago, but for most they would remain out of reach—few were made, and new they cost \$10,000 to \$18,000 in 2019 dollars. "We couldn't wait to get a LinnDrum," Lawrence says. "We wanted that side-stick sound and the smashing, detuned snare drum like from 1999."

Prince radically tweaked the sound of his preferred equipment, though, so at first hardly anyone knew he used a Linn. "We were trying to get the Prince sound, and we were

like, 'What the fuck are they doing to these drums?'" Lawrence says. "That drove us to try playing the Mattel Synsonics drum machine—which was a toy—through the PA."

"I remember I searched high and low trying to figure out how he made that sound, and found out he was using a Linn drum machine, which I already had," says Saunders. "All he did was turn the side-stick all the way down," detuning the machine's sampled cross-stick rim hit into a deep knock. Once Saunders mastered the effect on his own Linn, he used it on several tracks he produced or coproduced in the mid-80s, including "Funk You Up," "Love Can't Turn Around," and "Real Love" (a version of which featured Chicago DJ and producer Farley "Jackmaster" Funk scratching with Prince records).

Oliphant hears plenty of Prince in "It's About House (Off Beat Acid Mix)," a 1989 cut by Trax Records group J.R.'s House Co. with



Oliphant spins Prince records at his home in Rogers Park.
 © RYAN EDMUND FOR CHICAGO READER

Felix da Housecat on keyboards. It's driven by a relentless barrage of hi-hats and steady, powerful kicks and snares from a Linn. "The song was made with a bass guitar, which is unheard of in Chicago house music at this time," Oliphant says. He considers it a descendent of the extended film version of "Let's Go Crazy," with its long instrumental breakdown. "Whoever the producer was took the ideas of what Prince was doing and made it sound sicker than ever."

For both Prince and house producers, the Linn drum machine serves the same purpose: a pulse that hints at transcendence through physicality, whether on the dance floor, in church, or in the bedroom.

Steve "Silk" Hurley was inspired by the Oberheim synthesizer work of Prince and his former proteges Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis. Hurley played an Oberheim OB-8, a model they'd all used, on his 1987 hit "Jack Your Body."

That same year, Hurley got a call from Cat Glover, a Chicagoan who'd joined Prince's entourage as a dancer and vocalist. She was excited to share the news that Prince's forthcoming project, *The Black Album*, would include her rendition of a rap written by Hurley, originally from J.M. Silk's 1985 single "Music Is the Key." It would appear on a song called "Cindy C."

On *The Black Album*, Prince dabbled in and sometimes reacted against hip-hop and house, and it's compelling to hear him work with genres he himself influenced. Hurley looked forward to the royalties he'd get from a contribution to a major-label superstar's song, but his hopes were dashed when Prince abruptly withdrew the album just before its release. (A probably apocryphal story in Per Nilsen's 2004 Prince biography *Dance Music Sex Romance* claims he connected the record to spir-

itual negativity following a bad experience on ecstasy, which was peaking in popularity as a club drug at the time.) Instead Prince released *Lovesexy*, and *The Black Album* existed only as a bootleg until its belated official release in 1994.

Hurley saw no use in pursuing credit for a song that wasn't generating any on-the-books revenue. "Sometimes patience plays a part in getting what you deserve, not aggression," he says. His forbearance paid off a few years later, when he was contracted to remix Prince's 1991 single "Gett Off" in his signature house style.

While remixing an artist he idolizes, Hurley says, he likes to play their vocals alone, so he can pretend he's in the room with them. Once he arrived at the remix's pulsing organ line, the rest of the track came quickly. It eventually got its own video, quickly incorporated into MTV's rotation. "I was like a fan sitting in there, listening to him singing over my track," Hurley says.

To this day, Hurley isn't sure why Prince chose to use a rap he'd written on *The Black Album*. "Maybe because the rap was saying 'Music is the key to set yourself free'—that's what happened with him and what happened with me," he says. "I was kind of a lost soul, because I wasn't a great student. I was very quiet during my first two years of high school, but came out of my shell when I was around music. I found myself through DJing, and played keyboards in a show. I didn't really know what I wanted to do with my life, and I found myself through music."

"I was talking about the song could set you free, and you could be away from the world right now when you listen to the song," Hurley continues. "But I was also talking about DJing and the culture of house music in general. When people went to the house-music parties, there weren't a lot of fights. People were there

to escape all that."

Prince's greatest impact on Chicago may have been to remind it that a young Black man in a deindustrialized midwestern city could make music that reached around the world. "Big Ed" Matthews took inspiration from Prince's end-to-end talent: he wrote, performed, arranged, and produced his own work. "People in the business, even in house music,

found out Prince did everything himself," he says. "They fashioned themselves after that. A do-it-all type of artist."

Prince was already a profound influence in Chicago during the days of Lawrence's first group, Z Factor, active from 1981 till '83. "You can very easily find group photos of Z Factor—you can just see it," he says. "You can see all these poor Black kids trying to be Prince. That's just what it was."

Prince dabbled in house music throughout its commercial peak in the 90s, releasing house remixes of several songs ("1999," "My Name Is Prince," "The Future," "Do Your Dance"), and he continued recording new material until his death in 2016. In a 2012 e-mail interview with *Time Out Chicago*, the Purple One reflected on his early-80s shows at the Uptown Theatre and Park West. "We're not 12 reminisce, but we always got the audience we deserved and that time was pretty wild. Chicago is a music town," he said. "My father spoke of it often as being one of the places he liked 2 play best. They have seen the best and expect nothing less." **[E]**

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PICK OF THE WEEK

On her debut album, New York rapper Young M.A sets her sights on hip-hop's crown



© ANDREW BOYLE

YOUNG M.A

Fri 11/22, 7 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, sold out. **ALL**

WHEN NEW YORK rapper Katorah Marrero, aka Young M.A, released “OOUUUU” in 2016, its low-key braggadocio, minimal instrumental track, and easy, in-the-pocket flow quickly made it inescapable—and turned Young M.A into one of the most celebrated names in hip-hop. The next year, she included the song on the 2017 EP *Herstory*, and she’s spent most of the past two years working on her debut full-length, *Herstory in the Making* (M.A. Music/3D), which dropped in September. Life moves pretty fast (to mis-

contextualize a *Ferris Bueller* quote turned meme), but hip-hop races along in hyper-drive, and the time Young M.A spent out of the spotlight working on her album has felt like an eternity. Fortunately, her performances on *Herstory in the Making* prove she put those years to good use—she infuses even her iciest, fiercest lines with emotional depth. The record’s 21 tracks total nearly 70 minutes, and instead of focusing on an obvious single, Young M.A has made sure every second counts. —LEOR GALIL

THURSDAY 21

ITASCA *Matchess and Glyders* open. 9:30 PM, *Hideout*, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$12, \$10 in advance. 21+

Under the name Itasca, Kayla Cohen has released some of the most sublime under-the-radar singer-songwriter sounds of the decade. As a teenager, Cohen picked up the guitar to explore the experimental strains of music she liked, and soon her own tunes began to bubble to the surface. In 2012, she moved from New York to Los Angeles and released her first cassette, *Grace Riders on the Road*, which showcases her breezy, sepia-toned vibrations in sparse, mostly instrumental pieces that occasionally veer into fuzzy psychedelic drones. She found her niche on 2014’s *Unmoored by the Wind*, bringing dreamy, melancholic melodies to the forefront in a style that recalls 70s German downer-folk chanteuse Sibylle Baier. The following year, Cohen put out an all-instrumental cassette of subtle acoustic-guitar ruminations, *Ann’s Tradition*, and in 2016 she made her full-band debut with *Open to Chance*—released on killing-it label Paradise of Bachelors. Cohen’s laconic vision blossoms on the full-band album: she comes across like a wisened, weary troubadour against a backdrop of drums and pedal-steel guitar, and her material echoes the mellow, introspective Topanga/Laurel Canyon sound of early 70s songwriters such as Judee Sill, Carole King, and Joni Mitchell. Cohen wrote her latest album, *Spring* (out November 1), in an adobe house in rural New Mexico, and though it’s loosely based on her experiences living in the southwest, it features contributions from several Chicago musicians, including Cooper Crain (of Bitchin Bajas and Cave) and Jim Elkington (who adds string arrangements). Her Bandcamp page describes the album as “atmospheric,” “tranquil,” and “sun-dappled,” and I can think of no better terms to describe the gorgeously subtle and yearning “Blue Spring” and “Only a Trav-

eler”—these are arguably Cohen’s strongest songs yet. Onstage she plays her hushed music as quietly as it demands, confining her showiness to the fabulous 70s trousers she always seems to wear—this sure-to-be intimate performance should warm our already winter-frozen souls. —STEVE KRAKOW

NAV *Schoolboy Q* headlines. 7 PM, *Aragon Ballroom*, 1106 W. Lawrence, \$40-\$215. **ALL**

The world was introduced to Nav by his featured verse on “Biebs in the Trap,” off Travis Scott’s landmark 2016 *Birds in the Trap Sing McKnight*. In its alarmingly candid tale of drug abuse and the party life, Nav proved a good complement to Scott while leaning into the disaffected, robotic rap-singing that the psychedelic trap mastermind had popularized. Nav comes from the same Toronto hip-hop scene as Drake and the Weeknd, so “glassy-eyed confessional” is very much his zone, but the material on his past few releases has felt like he’s trying to play catch-up to his hometown peers with shallow but catchy forays into empty excess. Not until this spring’s *Bad Habits* did Nav seem to hit his stride for the first time: the album is full of undeniable choruses and raw, bleak lyrics, and even when he starts to lose steam, he keeps things moving with appearances from some of hip-hop’s current crop of greats, including the Weeknd, Young Thug, and the master of fucked-up-and-sad rap himself, Future. Though Nav will never overtake Drake as Toronto’s king of emotional hip-hop, it’s exciting to see him start to carve out a proper spot for himself in the city. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

UROCHROMES *Show Me the Body* headlines; *Urochromes*, *Buggin Out*, and *Bruised* open. 7:30 PM, *Subterranean*, 2011 W. North, \$15. 17+

After Urochromes posted the video for their frazzled ripper “Hair So Big” to YouTube this spring, a



Las Cafeteras © RAFA CARDENAS



Fran REILLY DREW

commenter promised, “Before I die I will give Gilbert Gottfried a Urochromes record.” I like to think Gottfried came up because Urochromes’ debut performance (captured on the band’s 2016 compilation *Anthology*) features front man Jackie “Jackieboy” McDermott unloading some harsh screams that sound ripped from the famously obnoxious comic’s throat. Jackieboy launched the two-piece band in western Massachusetts in the mid-00s, and his original concept for the group is basically performance art: he’d wanted to play the part of a Jewish comedian from New York who’d stumbled into the role of singer for a neanderthal hardcore band, and to split Urochromes’ sets evenly between music and stand-up. That plan didn’t quite pan out, but his comedic sensibility nonetheless manifests itself in Urochromes’ puckish energy, manic drive, and outsider flair. Backed by a drum machine (far from the norm in the hardcore scene), Jackieboy sings while guitarist Dick Riddick supersedes the band’s vitriolic punches with razor-sharp riffs and colossal feedback. On this year’s *Trope House* (Wharf Cat), Urochromes tamp down their sonic assault to experiment with different kinds of songwriting; on the sedate “Rumshpringa,” Riddick plays with a lackadaisical charm that’s just as powerful as the band’s hardest tracks. —LEOR GALIL

FRIDAY22

LAS CAFETERAS Sonorama DJs and DJ Rebel Betty open. 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$22, \$20 advance. 18+

Chicano indie-folk band Las Cafeteras formed in 2005, after their members forged friendships while taking classes in traditional music, dance, and art at Los Angeles Mexican American cultural center the Eastside Cafe. The six-piece have built a signature hybrid sound rooted in the Afro-Mexican genre *son jarocho*, which employs a rich mixture of indig-

enous themes and melodies, European stringed instruments, and African call-and-response vocals and syncopated rhythms. It took root in U.S. cities in the 80s and is now being transformed by new generations of musicians—including Los Cafeteras, who are committed activists and second-generation Americans with experience navigating the multiple cultures of immigrant children. They certainly don’t stay in folkloric territory, instead adding hip-hop, Spanglish pop, R&B, funk, punk, and rock to give their tunes a fierce, raucous energy that crosses musical borders with abandon. In their exhilarating concerts, Los Cafeteras jam on tunes from their two studio releases, which include original material and takes on classic protest songs, among them a Mexican folk-rock version of Woody Guthrie’s “This Land Is Your Land” and a hip-hop twist on “La Bamba” titled “La Bamba Rebelde” in which they declare, “Yo no creo en fronteras, yo cruzaré!” (“I don’t believe in borders, I will cross!”). The bandmates are all multi-instrumentalists; between them they play several instruments from the *son jarocho* tradition, such as the *quijada* (a donkey jawbone) and the *jarana* (similar to a small guitar), as well as keyboard, bass, drums, and glockenspiel (a surprising addition, but trust me, it works). Several members are also accomplished dancers, and they always incorporate exuberant *zapateado* (a traditional dance style that involves intricate percussive footwork on a wooden platform) into their joyful celebrations of immigrant storytelling and survival. —CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON

KAI WACHI Sam Lamar opens. 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 1375 W. Lake, \$22, \$18 in advance. 18+

“Wow, this is very 2012 dubstep,” my 16-year-old quipped when he heard *Demigod* (Kannibalen), the latest album from DJ and producer Kai Wachi. Sure enough, Wachi did get his start that year, and he’s been keeping the faith ever since—which my son and I agree isn’t such a bad thing. The title ➔

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continued from 31

track doesn't exactly smash any Skrillex paradigms, but the sound is enormous: synths rev up to thrash-metal speeds and beats drop from great heights to smash open with a screech of filthy static. Wachi's rapping on "Level" captures the album's lyrical concerns succinctly: alongside the cheerful machine-gun automation of the hammering electronic pulses, he delivers lines such as "Shoot it / Snort it / Smoke it / Fuck it / I be on another level." He does stretch himself a bit on "Photograph," where Claudia Bouvette's sensuous, R&B-pop vocals slide into his flurry of noise like a rebel ship swooping into the Death Star. "Heartless," a collaboration with fellow Boise native and heavily Auto-Tuned singer-rapper YLTI, is positively mellow, with gentle ambient synths and xylophone tones that seem more suited to a hotel lounge than a rave. But the bulk of the album (including, unsurprisingly, songs called "Break" and "Kamikaze") is true to form—loud and frenetic, with blasting bass. —**NOAH BERLATSKY**

YOUNG M.A See *Pick of the Week*, page 30.
 7 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, sold out. 

SATURDAY 23

FRAN Tobacco City and Mia Joy open. 9:30 PM, Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$10. 21+

Maria Jacobson, front woman of Chicago indie-rock group Fran, recently did a podcast interview with CHIRP where she talks about how she turned to music while attending Bennington College. "Since I grew up doing theater, it was always doing someone else's work, and I always felt comfortable doing that," she says. "There was a shift in college where I really started to resent acting because it felt like I was a pawn in someone else's idea." When Jacobson



Christine Fellows  LUCKYGIRLPHOTOGRAPHY

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES by PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE



PIECES OF PEACE

SOUL-FUNK BAND PIECES OF PEACE WERE TILL RECENTLY ONE OF CHICAGO'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS. BASSIST BERNARD REED, BORN IN CHICAGO AND RAISED ON THE WEST SIDE, ANCHORED THE GROUP AS A LAD HE COFOUNDED DOO-WOP ACT THE CONSTELLATIONS, WHO BACKED ARTISTS RECORDING FOR CHESSE, SMASH, & ROULETTE—THUS EXPOSING REED TO THE LIFE-CHANGING SKILLS OF SESSION STARS PHIL UPCHURCH & REGGIE BOYD AND ARRANGER JOHNNY PATE. AFTER HIS BROTHER DANNY STARTED PLAYING GUITAR FOR SOUL GROUP THE ARTISTICS, BERNARD CAME ABOARD AS A SONGWRITER, BASSIST, AND CHOREOGRAPHER. THE BROTHERS SOON JOINED THE HOUSE BAND FOR GRUNSWICK, THE ARTISTICS' LABEL, SUPPORTING THE LIKES OF JACKIE WILSON, THE CHI-LITES, BARBARA ACKLIN, AND GENE CHANDLER. BUT WHEN GRUNSWICK BOSS CARL DAVIS GAVE A PRODUCER'S JOB THAT BERNARD WANTED TO THE CHI-LITES' EUGENE RECORD, BERNARD BAILED WITH THE BAND: GUITARIST JOHN BISHOP, SAX MAN JERRY WILSON, DRUMMER HAL NESBITT, AND TRUMPETER MICHAEL DAVIS (LATER OF EARTH, WIND & FIRE). THEY TOOK THE

NAME PIECES OF PEACE AND WENT TO WORK FOR TWINIGHT RECORDS, BACKING LABEL STAR SYL JOHNSON. WITH NEW DRUMMER FRED WHITE & THE ADDITION OF SINGER KING JOHNSON & KEYBOARDIST BENJAMIN WRIGHT, P.O.P. CUT THE ONLY RELEASE UNDER THEIR NAME DURING THE BAND'S LIFE-TIME: THE FUNKY 1971 SINGLE "PASS IT ON," ISSUED ON THE SCARAB LABEL RUN BY SPIRITUAL SOUL-JAZZ COLLECTIVE THE PHARAOHS. THEY RECORDED AN LP IN 1972 WITH NEW DRUMMER FRED CRUTCHFIELD, FLUTIST JOEL BRANDON, AND SEVERAL PHARAOHS, BUT IT WAS SHELVED AFTER THE BAND SPLIT DURING A DISASTROUS TOUR OF ASIA. IN 2007, THE SAME YEAR NUMERO GROUP REISSUED THE SINGLE IN ITS ECCENTRIC SOUL SERIES, DISHADOW'S QUANTUM PROJECTS (MPRINT CALI-TEX RELEASED THE LP FINALLY SHOWING OFF PIECES OF PEACE'S RANGE, FROM SWEET SOUL TUNES ("I STILL CARE") TO EXTENDED JAMS ("POLLUTION").

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first picked up music as a creative outlet, she'd play guitar in private and sketch out pieces of songs, the way some people jot down thoughts in a journal. But in the past few years she's made her art quite public, and since Fran's first EP, 2015's *More Enough*, she's helped build the band into one of Chicago's most promising indie-rock newcomers. This headlining set at the Hideout celebrates Fran's new debut album, *A Private Picture* (Fire Talk), whose taut, thoughtful songs are further sharpened by a pristine elegance even in their noisiest moments. "Company" in particular ties together anxious, fluttering passages and raw, ferocious climaxes so masterfully that its surges stay cathartic no matter how many times you listen. —**LEOR GALIL**

CHRISTINE FELLOWS John K. Samson headlines. 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, sold out. 17+

It'd be a mistake to call Christine Fellows's two previous albums "concept albums," but each has a singular point of inspiration: *Femmes de Chez Nous* (2011) was born out of the Canadian singer-songwriter and poet's research into the history of women in Winnipeg (conducted during her residency at Le Musée de Saint-Boniface, a Franco-Manitoban culture museum housed in a former nunnery). *Burning Daylight* (2014) is a collection of odes to the Canadian north, partly inspired by Jack London stories. On her most recent record, last year's *Roses on the Vine*, Fellows shifts focus to a seemingly smaller scale: a butterfly emerging from its

MUSIC

cocoon, children planning for the future, and other moments of transformation and connection. She's joined by a host of veteran musicians, including her longtime collaborators Jason Tait, Greg Smith, and John K. Samson (Samson is also her husband, and plays with Tait and Smith in indie-rock four-piece the Weakerthans). Fellows, Tait, and Samson have been working together since her first solo record, 2000's *2 Little Birds*, and Smith joined them two years later for *The Last One Standing*. *Roses* shows Fellows in peak form. On "Spell to Bring Lost Creatures Home," she expertly reconfigures the work of poet Kathleen Raine in a song that feels like a haunting blessing underscored by menacing strings. The album ends with "The Swimmer," a gentle tribute to Faron Hall, a local Winnipeg hero. He saved three people from drowning in separate instances in 2009 and received several awards for his bravery, including the Mayor's Medal of Valor, but he also struggled with homelessness, the lasting effects of family tragedy (both his mother and his sister were murdered), and alcoholism; in 2014 he drowned in Winnipeg's Red River. In the song's final moments, Fellows offers a hand to Hall, singing, "You are not alone / The world is your home / You'll always ring clear to me." Though the world that Fellows is singing from—a world that would've given Hall the support he needed—isn't quite here yet, you can almost see it just before the echoes of her voice fade away.

—ED BLAIR

MONDAY25

CHERIE CURRIE & BRIE DARLING *White Mystery* opens. 8 PM, City Winery, 1200 W. Randolph, \$25-\$35. 

Every few years there seems to be a wave of think pieces that herald a new age of "women in rock." That's great in principle, but in practice, writers have often bolstered their case for the latest wave by erasing the many, many women who've led the way for it, which results in an ahistorical mess that throws generations of women rockers under the tour bus. Cherie Currie and Brie Darling aren't having it. Darling made her mark in the late 60s and early 70s as the drummer of Fanny, one of the first all-woman rock bands, before going on to record with artists such as Carole King, ELO, and the Temptations. And in the mid-70s Currie fronted teenage rock group the Runaways, whose members also included Lita Ford and Joan Jett. The two pioneering musicians finally met in 2017, when Currie was invited to sing on the Fanny retrospective album *Fanny Marked the Earth*, and they hit it off quickly. In August they released their debut as a duo, *The Motivator*, which takes its name from a T. Rex track. Darling and Currie share vocals throughout the record, which contains nine well-chosen if not groundbreaking covers of songs by the Rolling ➔

UPCOMING SHOWS



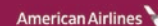
- 11.22 Our Last Night w/ I See Stars, The Word Alive, Ashland
 11.23 Chon & Between the Buried and Me w/ Intervals
 11.26 Tobe Nwigwe
 11.27 Ice Nine Kills w/ Fit For A King, Light The Torch, Make Them Suffer, Awake At Last
 11.29 Reverend Horton Heat w/ The Voodoo Glow Skulls, New Bomb Turks, Dave Alvin
 11.30 BJ The Chicago Kid w/ Rayana Jay, KAMAUU
 12.01 Issues w/ Polyphia, Lil Aaron, Sleep Token
 12.02 Static X & Mushroomhead w/ Dope, Wednesday 13, Raven Black
 12.03 As I Lay Dying w/ After The Burial, Emmure
 12.08 Steel Panther w/ Stitched Up Heart
 12.10 Dir en grey
 12.14 Sister Hazel 12.15 Sister Hazel (Brunch)
 12.20 All Time Low 12.21 All Time Low 12.22 All Time Low
 12.28 The Selena Experience
 12.31 Motion City Soundtrack
 1.03 Southern Accents 1/4 Trippin Billies
 1.10 Led Zeppelin 2 1/11 Led Zeppelin 2
 1.15 Beartooth & Motionless in White
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- 12.8-10 LOS LOBOS
 12.11 DAN RODRIGUEZ
 12.12 KEVIN ROSS
 THE MASH! UP EXPERIENCE
 12.15 JANE LYNCH
 SWINGIN' LITTLE CHRISTMAS
 12.16 JUMP, LITTLE CHILDREN
 WITH HULA HI-FI
 12.17 JAKE CLEMONS
 12.18 STEPHEN KELLOGG

UPCOMING SHOWS

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 12.21-23 MICHAEL MCDERMOTT
 MISCHIEF & MISTLETOE
 12.25 CHRISTMAS FOR THE JEWS FEAT.
 JOEL CHASNOFF, JASON SURAN,
 SOHRAB FOROUZESH
 12.26-27 SHEMEKIA COPELAND
 WITH KEVIN BURT
 12.28 FREDDIE JACKSON
 12.29 BODEANS
 12.30-1.1 AVERY*SUNSHINE
 1.3 PETER ASHER
 1.4 SPAGA - 2 PM SHOW
 1.4 THE CLAUDETTES
 WITH NORA O'CONNOR
 1.5 JON B.





Cherie Currie and Brie Darling © COREY PARKS

continued from 33

Stones, the Kinks, Stevie Wonder, John Lennon, and Pete Townsend's late 60s project Thunderclap Newman. But the real selling point here is their three originals, whose spontaneous, lusty feel proves you can be world-weary without losing your joie de vivre. —MONICA KENDRICK

TUESDAY 26

JOZEF VAN WISSEM Matt Jencik and Carrier open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$10. 21+

For the better part of two decades, Jozef Van Wissem has been on a mission to challenge the notion that his main instrument is a museum piece. The 57-year-old Dutchman has recontextualized the Renaissance lute by submerging its sound in Maurizio Bianchi's industrial noise, by improvising with guitarist Tetuzi Akiyama, and by engaging in instrumental duels with feedback guitarist and filmmaker Jim Jarmusch. But on his latest album, *We Adore You, You Have No Name* (Consouling Sound), Van Wissem has returned to the gallery. "You Know That I Love You" is modeled on the madrigal that's being performed by the boy musician in Michelangelo Caravaggio's 16th-century painting *Lute Player*—Van Wissem was commissioned by the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg, Russia, to play the piece during an unveiling event for the restored artwork in late 2017. On another song, "Bow Down," he sings about the medieval practice of drinking alcohol because untreated water was so unsafe—and given the ongoing crisis in Flint, Michigan, it would seem that not much has changed since the dark ages. Van Wissem last played here in 2013, and since then his other records have added electric guitar, programmed beats, and reverb-saturated vocals to the sparse, palindromic figures he plays on his lute. He only tours with his main instrument, but you can expect to hear him sing a couple tunes at this show. —BILL MEYER



High on Fire © COURTESY THE ARTIST

WEDNESDAY 27

HIGH ON FIRE Power Trip, Devil Master, and Creeping Death open. 7 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$30, \$25 in advance. 18+

It's finally happening! High on Fire, the most beloved heavy-metal band of the modern era, are going on tour in support of their eighth studio album and best release yet, last year's *Electric Messiah*. They've tried twice before, but both times they hit roadblocks. In January, the band canceled the second of two tours when singer and guitarist Matt Pike, who's battling diabetes, had some of his toes surgically removed. A few weeks later, the group won the first Grammy of their two-decade career, and things seemed to be getting back

on track. Then in July, cofounder and drummer Des Kensel—whose relentless, thunderous gallop anchors the band's signature sound—announced his departure. But High on Fire are unbreakable veterans who've soldiered through the trenches of metal before (especially Pike, who essentially laid down the template for stoner metal as we know it when he cofounded Sleep nearly 30 years ago), so it takes more than losing a drummer and a few toes to stop them. This fall Pike and bassist Jeff Matz have teamed up with Wear Your Wounds drummer Chris Maggio, who's previously played in Coliseum and Trap Them and knows plenty about hammering out massive, monster grooves. With its crushing, boneheaded riffs, soaring howls, and artillery-fire drumming, *Electric Messiah* is everything that's great about heavy metal, past or present—even without Kensel, it'll be amazing to see these songs live. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

EARLY WARNINGS
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READER



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

AUTUMN IN CHICAGO is a grind of shitty weather and grim anticipation of enforced holiday cheer, so it always puts Gossip Wolf in a noise-rock mood. Luckily, two of the city's most effective practitioners, **Den** and **Salvation**, drop fresh ordnance this week! Den's new album, **Iron Desert**, features a trench full of festering, gangrenous grooves such as stand-out cut "Taste for Blood." They celebrate at a local DIY venue on Friday, November 22, with Barren Heir, Mayor Daley, and Lilac; e-mail noise.den@gmail.com for details. Salvation's new full-length, **Year of the Fly**, kicks off with the densely agitated cacophony of "Slit My Throat" and only goes downhill (quite delightfully) from there! On Wednesday, November 27, they play on a stacked **Empty Bottle** bill that also includes Ganser, No Men, and Lug-gage, who release *Shift* that day.

Gossip Wolf hasn't been inside Edge-water's beautiful, bouldery **Epworth United Methodist Church**, but churches being what they are, the acoustics are doubtless majestic. On Saturday, November 23, a slew of local avant-garde and improvising artists perform there for the **Chicago Experimental Music Festival**, including self-described "power ambient duo" **Magick Potion**, static-obsessed noise project **Malice Coltrane**, and violist **Johanna Brock**. Tickets are cash only at the door, and the organizers warn that "no backpacks, messenger bags, or bags will be allowed into the venue."

If you fondly remember **Sidekick Kato** from their glory days of all-ages Fire-side Bowl shows, or if you missed their 2018 reunion gig at Chop Shop, you're in luck! On Friday, November 22, the Des Plaines "drunk emo" band return to **Chop Shop** for another reunion set. Few histories of 90s emo mention Sidekick Kato, but they had a special place in it, issuing two albums on vital local label **Johann's Face**. And 1996's scrappy **1st Class Chump** has aged better than lots of mid-90s pop punk! —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

ALL AGES FREE



Niall Horan DEAN MARTINDALE

NEW

Airborne Toxic Event 6/19/20, 7:30 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM

Oren Ambarchi, Crys Cole 2/24/20, 8:30 PM, Constellation, part of the Frequency Festival

Anchr Magazine's Third Anniversary Showcase featuring Engine Summer, Burr Oak, Jungle Green, Sick Day, Rookie (DJ set) 1/4/20, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Baby Rose 2/20/20, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM

Big Something, Andy Frasco, Kyle Ayers 2/22/20, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Black Crowes 8/15/20, 8 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park

Black Lips 3/5/20, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Basia Bulat 4/4/20, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM, 18+

Chai 1/25/20, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM

Cornerstones of Rock featuring Buckingham, Ides of March, New Colony Six, Cryan' Shames, Shadows of Knight 11/30, 8 PM, Arcata Theatre, Saint Charles

Charles Curtis 2/27/20, 7 PM, Fullerton Hall, Art Institute of Chicago, part of the Frequency Festival

Julia Eckhardt & Nate Wooley 2/26/20, 8 PM, Bond Chapel, University of Chicago, part of the Frequency Festival

Foals, Local Natives 6/10/20, 7 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+

Galantis 3/7/20, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

David Gray 7/18/20, 8 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion

Hembree 2/21/20, 9 PM, Empty

Bottle, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM

Holiday Horror featuring Vogds, Cae Monae, Gabriel Anaya, Alex Grelle, Glamhag, Irregular Girl, Mary Williamson, DJ Ariel Zetina, DJ Bryce Love Fields 12/3, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Niall Horan, Lewis Capaldi, Fletcher 5/9/20, 7 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont

In This Moment, Black Veil Brides, Ded, Raven Black 4/11/20, 6 PM, Aragon Ballroom

Hayden James (DJ set) 1/17/20, 10 PM, Spy Bar

Kilo Kish 1/18/20, 9 PM, Sleeping Village, part of Tomorrow Never Knows festival

King Krule 4/15/20, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM, 18+

Kirby Grip, Gal Gun 11/29, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

Kiss 9/12/20, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM

Katinka Kleijn, Julian Otis 3/1/20, 8:30 PM, Constellation, part of the Frequency Festival

Annea Lockwood with Aperiodic & Nate Wooley 2/28/20, 8:30 PM, Constellation, part of the Frequency Festival

Annea Lockwood's A Sound Map of the Danube opening reception and discussion with Nate Wooley 2/29/20, 2 PM, Experimental Sound Studio, part of the Frequency Festival

Reba McEntire, Caylee Hammack 4/24/20, 8 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont, on sale Fri 11/22, noon

Buck Meek, Twain 1/19/20, 7 PM, Schubas, part of the Tomorrow Never Knows festival, 18+

Meth, Greet Death, Lume 1/30/20, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM

Oh Wonder 4/24/20, 7:30 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 11/22, 9 AM

Pan American, Cleared 1/18/20, 7:30 PM, International Museum of Surgical Science

Pulaski Squares (DJ set) 1/18/20, 11 PM, Sleeping Village, part of the Tomorrow Never Knows festival

Billy Raffoul 3/8/20, 7 PM, Schubas, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM, 18+

Ratboys, Slow Mass 2/28/20, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Ratt 12/27, 8 PM, Arcata Theatre, Saint Charles

Noah Reid, Matthew Barber 3/10/20, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+

Sea and Cake 2/29/20, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM

Slander, Dylan Matthew 3/21/20, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

Stander, Dungeon Mother, Jordan Reyes, Pepper Mill 12/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Harry Styles, Jenny Lewis 7/24/20, 8 PM, United Center, on sale Fri 11/22, 11 AM

Susto 2/20/20, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM, 18+

Rajna Swaminathan & Ganavya Doraiswamy 3/1/20, 2 PM, Chicago Cultural Center, Claudia Cassidy Theater, part of the Frequency Festival

Trampa, Figure, Phiso 1/24/20, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Trippie Redd 2/8/20, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre

Twiddle 2/22/20, 9 PM, Park West, 18+

Vulgar Boatmen, Sunshine

EARLY WARNINGS

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Boys 1/11/20, 7 PM, Schubas

Washed Out DJ Set with Hood Internet 12/20, 9:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Bob Weir & Wolf Bros 3/11-3/12/20, 7 PM, Chicago Theatre

WGCI Big Jam 2019 featuring Migos, Dababy, Megan Thee Stallion, G Herbo, Wale, Jacquees, Yella Beezy, Tink 12/20, 7 PM, United Center

Keith Fullerton Whitman, John McCowen 2/29/20, 8:30 PM, Constellation, part of the Frequency Festival

Jacob Wick solo, Jacob Wick & Phil Sudderberg 2/25/20, 6:30 PM, Museum of Contemporary Art, part of the Frequency Festival

Wild Rivers, Allman Brown 5/9/20, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 11/22, 10 AM, 18+

Wolf Parade, Jo Passed 2/16/20, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Wonder Years, Free Throw, Spanish Love Songs, Pool Kids 3/15/20, 5 PM, Concord Music Hall

UPDATED

Pigface 11/30, 4:30 and 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 4:30 PM show added, 18+

Valee, Qari 12/28, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, canceled; contact point of purchase for refund information about tickets purchased for 7/18 or 12/28, 17+

UPCOMING

12th Planet, Dogma 12/27, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Adicts 1/29/20, 8 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Arrivals 12/28, 8 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 17+

Peter Asher 1/3/20, 8 PM, City Winery

Clozee 12/29, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Cat Clyde, Jeremie Albino 12/4, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Cold War Kids, Overcoats 1/25/20, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

Colony House, Tyson Motsenbocker 3/15/20, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall

Shawn Colvin 5/22-5/23/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Disco Biscuits 1/2-1/4/20, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio, Neal Francis 12/31, 9 PM, Park West, 18+

Jon Langford & Sally Timms 1/19/20, 3 PM, Hideout

Bettye LaVette 12/20, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Madball, Old Firm Casuals, Fear City, Absent Mind 12/13, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 18+

Magic City Hippies 1/31/20, 9 PM, Metro, 18+

Makeout 12/12, 7 PM, Reggies' Rock Club

Manchester Orchestra, Foxing 12/4, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

Eve Maret, Coupler 12/23, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Maverick Sabre 1/20/20, 7:30 PM, Schubas

Mayhem & Abbath 4/10/20, 7 PM, Metro, 18+

Madison McFerrin 12/13, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

Motet, Exmag 12/14, 9 PM, the Vic, 18+

Mount Eerie, Julie Doiron 12/9, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Ours 12/1, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Over The Rhine 12/7, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Papooz 2/24/20, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Party Favor 11/30, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Kim Petras, Alex Chapman 11/27, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre

Sir 12/9, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Sleep, Big Business 12/31, 10 PM, Thalia Hall

Sleep, Circuit des Yeux 12/29, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Sleep, Joshua Abrams's Natural Information Society 12/30, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Slow Hollows 2/21/20, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

Jaden Smith, Willow Smith 11/30, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre

Snails, Rusko, Kompay, Hi I'm Ghost 12/28, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

Social Act, Nicholas Barron 12/13, 8:45 PM, Martyrs' Room

Sofi Tukker 4/11/20, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre

Sons of the Never Wrong, Katie Dahl 1/12/20, 7 PM, City Winery

Sons of the Silent Age, Ready Freddie 1/11/20, 7 PM, Metro, 18+

Allen Stone 3/14/20, 7:30 PM, The Vic

Svdden Death 1/10/20, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Patrick Sweany 12/31, 8 PM, Reggies' Music Joint

Tama Sumo & Lakuti, Harry Cross 12/20, 10 PM, Smart Bar

SAVAGE LOVE

How not to be *that* professor

Pull-no-punches advice to a self-described horndog, and more

By **DAN SAVAGE**

Q: I'm a fortysomething gay male professor at a small college. I try hard not to get attracted to students, and usually succeed. But it's tough to resist temptation when you're surrounded by hot, smart, fun, horny young guys in a rural area with not many other options. Over the past several years, I've ended up having sex with several students. None of them were students I was currently teaching or

likely to teach, and two had graduated. I'm not actually violating college policy, which only bans faculty from getting involved with students they're currently teaching. I haven't ever done anything on campus or made the first move—and when one of them starts trying to hit on me, I've usually mustered the willpower to ignore him. On rare occasions when I've ended up letting my cock do the thinking, I've treated

my younger partners with kindness and respect and observed your campsite rule. All of these younger guys solemnly swore to keep our extracurricular activities secret, but still, word might leak out, and I don't want to become known on campus as one of "those" professors. Most important, I don't want my queer male students—many of whom look to me for mentorship—to think I'm grooming them for sex after

I'm no longer teaching them, and I don't want my female and straight male students to feel like second-class citizens. On the other hand, I'm a sex-positive person who believes that happy, consensual banging has its own intrinsic value. I tend to be attracted to younger guys, and I think part of the attraction is that they're less jaded about sex and more excited. Fucking them feels less transactional than the typical hi-bang-jizz-wipe-bye Grindr hookup that seems to be the norm with gay guys in their 30s and older. I'm struggling with how I should feel about these off-campus romps. We're all adults, and we're not breaking any rules. Obviously the behavior is professionally risky for me, probably foolhardy. But is it immoral? Above all, what should I do when future opportunities present themselves? —**PROFESSOR HORN-DOG**

A: Can we please not describe one adult subtly and perhaps unintentionally telegraphing their attraction to another adult as "grooming"? That term refers to adult sexual predators insinuating themselves into the lives of minors, slowly gaining their trust and the trust of their family members, so they can abuse them sexually. It means something very specific, PHD, and we shouldn't confuse or cheapen its meaning by applying it to your behavior—which, while not criminal or immoral, is incredibly stupid.

Yes, these relationships are permissible, in the sense that the school where you teach permits them. They aren't against the rules, those young men were all consenting adults, and you're honoring the campsite rule (leave them in better shape than you found them). But this is an advice column, PHD, and you're not asking me what's

permissible, but what's advisable. And what you're doing is crazy inadvisable for all the reasons you cite: the risk of promising and hot gay male students misinterpreting your interest in them as sexual, your straight students feeling like they may not be getting the full benefit of your attention, and your mediocre and not-hot gay male students—sorry, your mediocre and not conventionally attractive gay male students—interpreting their failing grades as sexual rejection.

I too am a sex-positive person who believes in happy, consensual banging, and I don't think what you're doing is immoral. But it is incredibly reckless at this particular moment on any American college campus. Power and consent are minefields that students, professors, and administrators are tiptoeing through, PHD, but you're humping your way across them. Becoming known on campus as one of "those" professors—because you are one of those professors—could wind up being the least of your problems. What if your college revises its rules while you're balls-deep in a student? What if you have a falling-out with a student you banged and he files a complaint? What if you want to move to a different school that has different rules and your reputation precedes and disqualifies you?

Finally, PHD, it's fine to be attracted to younger guys. But if all your experiences with guys in their 30s have been dispiriting and transactional, it sounds like you were the common denominator in a lot of meh sexual encounters. Speaking from experience, I can say that plenty of guys over 30 are excited about sex and good at it. If every guy over 30 you've been with has been underwhelming, well, it's possible they were picking up on your lack of enthusiasm/attrac-

tion and reflecting that back at you.

Q: I'm a 33-year-old woman in a nine-year LTR with another woman. Our relationship hasn't been great in the intimacy department for a long time. We've talked it to death, with no real significant change. I started talking to a woman online a few states over who is married and in a similar situation with her husband. Things are great between us, but neither of us envisions a future where we would leave our partner. My partner is chronically ill and I support her financially, and my online GF and her husband have young children. I'm wondering if you know anything about sustainability in a relationship with someone online. I'll admit that sometimes it's torture to not be able to be with her in real life. But then there's the question of our significant others. Is it OK to keep this secret if things are good otherwise? —**MAKING IT LAST FOREVER**

A: Your significant others aren't questions, MILF, they're people—and you don't intend to leave your person, and your online girlfriend doesn't intend to leave hers. So if you want to spare your chronically ill partner the anxiety of worrying you might leave her for this other person, then you'll keep the online GF a secret. But you need to ask yourself—and your online GF needs to ask herself—if this online relationship/emotional affair is making you a better, more contented, and more emotionally available partner to your IRL partner. If it's making you a better partner to the person you're actually/technically/physically with, then great. But if it's a distraction that's causing you to neglect or resent your IRL partner, MILF, then you'll



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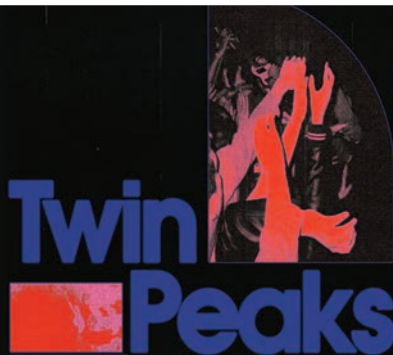
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